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Tarsākyā: an analysis of Sogdian Christianity based on Archaeological, Numismatic, Epigraphic and Textual Sources.

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in the Study of
Religions

2013

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ABSTRACT

Despite nearly two centuries of fascination in the scholarly world with the history of Sogdian culture there are still many under-researched areas. In particular, the history of the dissemination and enculturation of Christianity among Sogdians is one such area, which despite material and textual witness has not been studied autonomously. Instead, it has been incorporated into a broader discourse of the geographical-historical spread and enculturation of Christianity into the Central Asian landmass.

The existing studies on religions in Sogdiana have represented Sogdian society as a mosaic of religious communities with Zoroastrianism as a main religion which overshadowed the historical and socio-cultural significance of other religions such as Christianity among the Sogdians. This dissertation contends that Christianity among Sogdians, both in their native country and in the Diaspora, had a significant presence and that Sogdian Christians were instrumental in both enculturing Christianity as well as transmitting it to other ethnic groups.

This argument emerges from contextual and comparative ‘case studies’ of diverse material culture and textual evidence affiliated with Sogdians and Christianity. The evidence covered in this dissertation collectively constitutes a unique source supplying information about aspects of ‘Sogdian Christianity,’ such as its material and textual manifestations and its interrelationship with both its immediate cultural milieu and wider Christian *oikoumene*. In what follows, this dissertation will try to explain, through the testimony of the material and literary evidence, that Christianity among the Sogdian people had a footing in the local context and was expressed in local material and textual culture.

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This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing that is the outcome of work done in collaboration, except where specifically indicated in the text. Thus, any shortcomings in this work remain entirely my own.

DEDICATION

*xwt'w xwt'w. z'wrqyn xwšywny bγ'. tγw qy spty wny' wxypθty pcwqyrnyty ryž. yty s't
wyšnty ryž qy prršty'q n'm. tγw xwtw bγ' tqwš pr xypθny z'wr tw' bγy'qy' wyzr' r'θy
šw'mcy'.*

*Lord, Lord, mighty king and God, Thou who hast fulfilled the desire of those who fear
Thee and the desire of all those who truly invoke Thy name, so Thou, Lord God, look
upon Thy weak handmaid, and let me not cease from straightly traveling the road of Thy
divinity.**

I dedicate this dissertation to Mahtuma, Yuhanno and Elizavet for their love, care and support and in loving memory of my father Bobomurod Ashurov (April 1949- December 2009) who departed from this world when I began this project.

* Prayer of Saint Nāhīd; the restoration elements of the fragment were intentionally omitted for full text see SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 38-39

INTRODUCTION

The period between the fall of the great Kušan Kingdom (fourth century CE) and the Arab invasion (eighth century CE) was a time of great flourishing for Sogdiana both economically and culturally.

This time period witnessed the steady spread of Sogdian culture outside its immediate geopolitical boundaries; from the Zarafšān valley to Čač, Semirechye and China. Sogdian towns and cities were planted along the main trade routes and in economically strategic areas. Although these so called ‘colonies’ were primary agriculturalist societies, they played a major role in the development of local sedentary urban culture since much of the region was mainly inhabited by (semi) nomadic pastoralist communities.

Sogdian communities outside of Sogdiana proper were also instrumental ‘service providers’ for caravans (mainly led by Sogdians) that travelled through their cities. The prosperity of Sogdian commerce in early medieval period (fifth-eighth centuries CE) had significant implications for their culture. The trade brought them into close contact with different ‘ethno-linguistic’ communities and contributed to the enrichment of their worldview and of their culture in general. In particular, one of major consequences was the intensive growth of different religious components in Sogdian culture, such as Christianity.

Aside from references in literary sources, evidence of ‘Sogdian Christianity’ has reached us through various material culture objects and texts. However, as a subject that in itself merits detailed study it has never been a subject of independent historical inquiry. On the contrary, the overwhelming majority of existing scholarship considers the evidence of ‘Sogdian Christianity’ as a constitutive part of ‘Central Asian Christianity’. That is, the evidence pertaining to Christianity among Sogdians has been treated simply as a ‘part’ of the ‘whole’, namely Central Asia. It is for this reason that existing scholarship has not examined the evidence independently, but largely within the Central Asian geo-political context.

‘Sogdian Christianity’- defining a concept

The principal focus of this dissertation is to examine the significance and influence of Christianity as displayed in the material and literary culture products of a particular ethno-linguistic group. The term ‘Sogdian Christianity’ has been chosen to avoid imprecise geographical-oriented designations, such as ‘Christianity in Sogdiana’ or ‘Christianity in Central Asia’ as well as suggesting a term that has distinct meaning indicating Christianity as a phenomenon in history and culture of one particular people group.

The dissertation maintains that ‘Sogdian Christianity’ was born out of the Syriac-speaking Church of the East, which was the principal expression of Christianity in Sassanid Persia. In other words, ‘Sogdian Christianity’ was not a dogmatically independent form of Christianity. However, it possessed unique characteristics, which principally can be defined on the basis of the sociological, linguistic, cultural and political context in which it functioned. The Sogdian identity of the Church of the East is comparable to the Persian described by Christopher Buck:

“The “Church of the East” was ecclesiastically “Persian” in that it was, with minor exceptions, the officially recognized Church of the Sasanian empire. The Church was politically “Persian” due to the role of Sasanian kings in the eleven Synods from 410 to 775 C.E. The Church was geographically “Persian” in that it was coextensive with, but not limited to the orbit of the Sasanian empire.”¹

From ‘Christianity in Central Asia’ to ‘Sogdian Christianity’: methodological consideration

‘Christianity in Central Asia’ as a theme in oriental studies or historiography was born in the latter decades of the 19th century. In particular, the birth of the topic is linked with the discovery of Christian tombstones from two medieval cemeteries² between 1885 and 1886,³ in the Semirechye region.⁴ In Russian and to a certain extent also in European academic writings, the term ‘Christianity in Central Asia’ became popularised through Daniel Chwolson’s publication of the above mentioned tombstones and Vasily Barthold’s research from 1886 onwards. Barthold’s works have focused on the historical context and literary

¹ BUCK, 1996, pp. 54.

² The main finds from these cemeteries are gravestones adorned with inscriptions and symbols. Of the 3000 gravestones, approximately 600 had Syriac inscriptions and were identified as Christian by their use of Syriac and Christian symbols, notably crosses that were engraved on them. Although written in Syriac script, these gravestones were actually in both Syriac and Turkish languages. The exception is the gravestone of the Armenian bishop that is partially written in Armenian script (MAPP, 1893-1894). Approximately 30 gravestones examined by Chwolson were wholly or partially in Turkic language.

³ The second Christian cemetery in Alamaliq, the borderland city with Chinese Turkestan was discovered in 1902 and Pavel Kokovtsov examined these gravestones. For details see: KOKOVTSOV, 1906, pp. 190-200; *ibid.*, 1907, pp. 427-458.

⁴ Historically Semirechye is understood as the administrative territory of Russian Empire in Central Asia that included Northern regions of Kyrgyzstan and South-Western Kazakhstan. In Kazakh and Kyrgyz languages, it is called Жерісі [Zhetysu] meaning ‘seven rivers’, referring to various rivers that flow northward into Balkhash Lake. The Semirechye is part of the today's Almaty Province of Kazakhstan. In this study, the term Semirechye is used in its historical 19th century meaning.

sources related to the dissemination of Christianity in the region (Arabic and Persian sources).⁵

However, 'Christianity in Central Asia' as a subject of inquiry in historical studies has never been defined with precision. While in the current scholarship it is broadly understood to imply the geographical-historical spread of Christianity into the regions spanning from the Caspian Sea to the Chinese and Mongolian borderlands, a more precise and differentiated analysis of the subject is needed.

The devising of the term 'Christianity in Central Asia' as conceptual framework was certainly an essential step in historiographical terms, which is evidenced by many varied interdisciplinary studies written within this framework.⁶ Nonetheless, current treatment of the subject from the geographical perspective has not offered a methodological frame in which the topic could be addressed from the perspective of individual cultures and people, who live in the area designated as Central Asia. In particular, the adoption of this broad region-oriented (geographical) approach, namely 'Christianity in Central Asia' is manifested in the following:

1. The absence of a precise qualitative assessment of what 'Christianity in Central Asia' is., namely, whether it is a distinctive cultural-social phenomenon possessing local characteristics or whether it was a historical event concurring with that in Iran and Mesopotamia and therefore void of local attributes. One of the prevailing discussions in existing scholarship is about commerce and the persecution of Christians being the main reasons behind the dissemination of Christianity into Central Asia. As a result,

⁵ His first essay titled '*О христианстве в Средней Азии*' Barthold wrote in 1888, which was published in German translation in 1891. Barthold's seminal work, which was based on his initial research of 1888 titled '*О христианстве в Туркестане в домонгольский период (По поводу семиреченских надписей)*', was written in 1893-94 (BARTHOLD, 1964, pp.265-302). Subsequently he also wrote three shorter essays on the history of Christianity in region. For detailed overview of the Barthold's research and bibliography see BARTHOLD, 1964, pp. 11-14.

⁶ The existing historiography on 'Christianity in Central Asia' can be broadly grouped into two categories:

1. Historical surveys (descriptive essays) discussing the spread of Christianity into Central Asia (the five former USSR countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). The significant contribution of these surveys emerges from their consideration and discussion of a wide range of information on political, cultural and economic life as well as the religious and cultural environments of the region. These works mainly discuss the material culture evidence discovered in the region as well as literary sources mentioning about Christian presence in the region. Additionally, the distinctive feature of majority of historical surveys on the topic is that they follow Barthold's research and are usually concerned with the chronology spanning between the 3rd and 13th centuries. The most suitable example of this category of scholarship is represented by a volume of articles edited by Lyudmila Zhukova (ZHUKOVA, 1994) containing short essays discussing the archeological discoveries in the region pertinent the topic of 'Christianity in Central Asia'.
2. Archaeological reports discussing usually one or several related archaeological evidence e.g. grave stones or pendant crosses. These reports mainly comment in brief about the association of the evidence with Christianity and do not provide in-depth assessment of spread and enculturation of Christianity in the region.

‘Christianity in Central Asia’ appears to be perceived generally as the faith of individual migrant communities either as temporary residents, such as traders, or resettled refugee communities of Mesopotamian origin or from Iran proper. In either case in identifying the Christian communities, the impact of Christianity on the local native population and its localised manifestation is not accentuated.

2. A quantitative presentation of material evidence, including historical records, without chronological restrictions. Thus, an extremely broad account of the history of Christianity in the region is given, quantified by the available evidence without a specific restricted chronology and without detailed assessment of the ‘nature’ and ‘quality’ of the evidence in specific ethno-cultural regions of so-called Central Asia. In other words, the existing research has overlooked the linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity of the Central Asian region and thus its Christian communities. The existing studies make only passing comments about different ‘ethno-linguistic’ groups in Central Asia among which Christianity was present, such as the Chorasmians (mostly based on Al-Bīrūnī’s account) or the Sogdians (mostly based on Barthold’s suggestion).⁷

It may be possible that overlooking the distinct cultural and ‘ethno-linguistic’ expressions of Christianity in Central Asia in the current scholarship has resulted from seeing the geographical term Central Asia as a ‘whole’ and the individual expressions and histories of Christianity as a ‘part’, which can be meaningful only in relation to the former and not separately.

This thesis suggests that Central Asia as a homogenous term may be used to designate a geographical reality, but certainly it does not convey cultural and ‘ethno-linguistic’ realities.

⁷ One example where such approach is very unambiguous is NIKITIN, 1984, pp. 121-137. Examples can be further enumerated. Such as SACHAU 1918, pp. 399-409, *ibid*, 1919 that focuses mainly on the overall spread of Christianity into Central Asia on the basis of Arabic, Persian and Syriac sources. Similar to Sachau are MINGANA 1925a, *ibid*, 1925b and MINGANA 1926. The ‘Christianity in Central Asia’ is also covered to certain extent under ‘Christianity in Asia’ scholarship. The more recent and major scholarship in this group are MOFFETT, 1992 and GILLMAN & KLIMKEIT, 1999. In both of these works the authors outline the history of Christianity following the journey of “...the churches that grew and spread outside the Roman Empire in ancient and oriental kingdoms east of the Euphrates and stretching along the Old Silk Road from Osrhoene through Persia to China or along the water routes from the Red Sea around Arabia to India.” (MOFFETT, 1992, pp. xiv). The value of these works is in that they “bring together the research of many, results which are otherwise to be found in a multitude of monographs and periodicals.” (MOFFETT, 1992, pp. x-xi). However, ‘Christianity in Asia’ similar to ‘Christianity in Central Asia’ scholarship does not present a thorough assessment of the impact of Christianity among one individual ‘ethno-linguistic’ group, but looks one its overall effect across the continent. Although Moffett does not present a special examination of Christianity among the Sogdians, GILLMAN & KLIMKEIT, 1999, pp. 212-222 have devoted a chapter to the history of Christianity in various parts of the Central Asian region, particularly Transoxiana. In particular, GILLMAN & KLIMKEIT, 1999, pp. 212 mention about Sogdians being an instrument in spreading Christianity outside their homeland among other nations such as the Turks and Chinese.

The region that is now commonly referred to as Central Asia is not referred to as a whole in many classical and medieval sources, but is rather designated on the basis of its cultural and ‘ethno-linguistic’ composition, after its inhabitants’ language and culture, as Sogdiana, Bactria, Chorasmia, and other regions. What this signifies is that Central Asia is not a single organic whole but an *assemblage* of autonomous cultural and ‘ethno-linguistic’ components (groups). This makes it possible to say that the different historical phenomena displayed in the material or literal evidence of these individual ethno-linguistic and cultural groups are also meaningful autonomously and therefore should be examined independently.

Therefore this study opts to shift from geographical-historical methodological approach to ethno-linguistic (ethno-cultural), i.e. from ‘Christianity in Central Asia’ to ‘Sogdian Christianity’.

‘Ethno-linguistic’ methodological approach: explanation

One possible way to elucidate the subject is to analyse the presence of Christianity within specific social (‘ethno-linguistic’) groups from Central Asia, who are known through their material and literal culture products that manifest an explicit Christian influence. The interaction of a given group with Christianity can undoubtedly form a specific historical object, which is to say a structured theme, which has its own social and cultural characteristics. Furthermore, such an interaction would be based on identifiable cultural transactions and activities, such as textual production (through the assessment of religious vocabulary development and translation mechanisms) and different forms of material culture that have emerged (both locally produced and imported given the fact there was demand for such objects) as a direct influence of Christianity in a given ‘ethno-linguistic’ community.

This framework would allow one to examine ‘Christianity’ as a historiographical subject and phenomenon identified by its ethno-cultural setting, in a precise historical context in which it developed and by which it was transformed. It will also have declined, and then been replaced by another competing religion or religions as well as being transmitted into another culture. To identify and examine the possible effects of Christianity in one such group would allow us to give historical and cultural reality to the undifferentiated phrase ‘Christianity in Central Asia’, which as was pointed out earlier at present is best understood as a historical geographical survey of the transmission of Christianity.

This methodological approach in this dissertation is termed 'ethno-linguistic'. However, it is not used in the linguistic or anthropological *sensu stricto*.⁸ The term here implies a mode of assessment which scrutinizes whatever available evidence is related to a subject of research within a selected individual culture. In other words this study proposes a qualitative assessment of the history of Christianity from the perspective of a particular 'ethno-linguistic' group with distinct cultural characteristics from the Central Asian linguistic and cultural matrix.

This dissertation, therefore, has as its goal the identification of the role and impact of Christianity among the Sogdians, who, as attested by their material and literary culture products, were both the 'most Christianised' nation as well as instrumental transmitters of Christianity in the region. This hopefully allows the subject of inquiry to be freed from the geographically imprecise matrix of 'Christianity in Central Asia' and to be evaluated as 'Sogdian Christianity', that is Christianity which was enculturated in a particular 'ethno-linguistic' group and has unambiguous material and textual manifestations, e.g. texts written in their language, as well as material objects recovered from archaeological or ethnographic researches.

The choice of Sogdians as an 'ethno-linguistic' group was influenced by both the availability of evidence (material culture⁹ and textual evidence¹⁰) and the historical role of Sogdians in the economic and cultural sphere of the region, including their records in historical writings of the medieval era.¹¹ The chronology of research, fifth-ninth centuries has been decided based on the following three considerations:

⁸ For the discussion of the term in anthropology and linguistics see FERRARO, 2006, pp.9-11.

⁹ The 'material culture' in this research is understood in FERGUSON, 1977, pp. 8 definition, which is 'all the things that people leave behind... all of the things people make from the physical world'. The examination of the numismatic material- Sogdian coins bearing Christian iconography is discussed in CHAPTER 2 and architectural and other small finds is discussed in CHAPTER 3 of this dissertation.

¹⁰ Sogdians are one of the few Iranian-speaking people whose Christian literary traditions have reached us. Of the Iranian-speaking people who lived in the Central Asian region, such as Parthians, Chorasmians, and Khotanese, Christian literature is known only in Sogdian. The presence of Christianity among other Iranian-speaking people, such as Chorasmians is known from literary sources and attested by the material culture. Details on the background history of research and discovery of the Sogdian Christian texts are given in CHAPTER 4 of this research.

¹¹ In existing scholarship, the best work describing the contribution of Sogdians into both commercial and cultural life of the Central Asian region including China, Iran and Byzantine as well as providing the most up-to-date bibliography record of scholarship on various aspects of Sogdian culture is VAISSIÈRE, 2005.

1. The sociological and structural changes within the Church of the East and in its geopolitical context (5th-9th centuries).

The primary changes in this period are highlighted by two major Synods of the Church of the East. The *Synod of Mar Isaac* (410 CE) was convened “in the days of Yazdgard (399-420 CE) the king and in the days of Mar Isaac the catholicos, who sat at Seleucia and Ctesiphon.”¹² This synod marks the starting point for the emergence of ‘Persian Christianity’ that would spread throughout Central Asia to China. From a sociological perspective, the *Synod of Mar Isaac* may be considered as a ‘new era’ for the Church of the East in Persia as an entity recognized by the state and the adherents of which were a recognized community. This was a significant social change for the Christian church in Persia, which had often been suspected of disloyalty.¹³ Further, the official recognition of the Christian patriarch was also influential in the formation and strengthening of the Persian-Christian identity of the Christians in Iran, who have existed much earlier than the date of the Synod.

An even greater change in the life of the Church of the East in Persia came about at the synod of *Mar Dādīšo* in 424 CE, which declared the Patriarch of the Persian Church to be autocephalous with respect to the five ‘Western’ patriarchates, resulting in the canonical and ecclesiastical independence of the Church of the East of Persia.¹⁴

These two ‘dramatic’ moments of the synods convened in 410 CE and 424 CE, (that is the recognition of the church and its community by the state and the declaration of its independence from other catholic patriarchates) have undoubtedly influenced the course of the history of Christianity in Persia and beyond, and especially outside of Iran proper, in regions with less centralized-political control, like Sogdiana.

¹² CHABOT, 1902, pp. 253; BAUM & WINKLER, 2003, pp. 14-17; YARSHATER, 2006, pp. 939-940; BROCK, 2006, pp.610-611. The acts of the Synod of Mar Isaac surviving in the work known by its French translation as the *Synodicon Orientale* (CHABOT, 1902), provide information both on the organization of the Church of the East in Persia as well as the role of the state in the life of the church. *Synodicon Orientale* commences with the Synod of Mar Isaac in 410 and covers up to the Synod of Mar Henanyeshu 2nd (775 CE) and includes valuable information on various aspects of the Church of the East in Persia, including its missionary outreach and theological developments. As indicated by LABOURT, 1904, pp. 93 the Synod of 410 in some literature is also called to be an Edict of Milan of the Persian Christianity. However, the comparison of the event of the 410 with the edict of Cyrus the Great, which was done by YOUNG, 1974, pp. 31-32, is contextually closer. The Sassanid monarchy claimed their ancestry from the Achaemenids as witnessed by the Darius inscriptions and the decree of Yazdgard I follows the same spirit. For evaluation of *Synodicon Orientale* in connection of Christianity in Central Asia see: HUNTER, 1992, pp.363-368.

¹³ BROCK, 1982, pp.1-19; *ibid*, 1996, pp.23-35.

¹⁴The Synod of Mar Dādīšo (424 CE) was particularly important in this regard. CHABOT, 1902, pp. 285-298; HUNTER, 1993, pp.556.

2. The social history of Sogdiana

The spread of Christianity into Sogdiana is also integral to its social history and to a large extent is linked with the socio-political developments of the whole Central Asian region. In other words, the introduction and integration of Christianity among the Sogdian people was contemporaneous with other events that had either direct or indirect influence on it.

For Sogdiana the fifth-ninth centuries were a turbulent political period, marked by the rise and fall of several ruling dynasties in Transoxiana: in particular the Hephthalites, otherwise known as the White Huns (410-557 CE), and the First and the Second Türk Empires (552 - 742 CE), federations of numerous Turkic groups occupying much of the central areas of Central Asia extending to the Mongolian borderlands and Western China. This chronology also coincided with the golden era of China marked by the rise of the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE) during which Christianity was officially permitted to be propagated on Chinese soil.

The early eighth century also saw the fall of the Sassanid Empire to the Arabs and the establishment of the Caliphate, first under the Umayyads (661–750 CE) followed by the Abbasids (750-1258 CE) across the geography of what was once a Persian Empire including its exterior frontiers in Central Asia, such as Sogdiana. The Arab expansion into Sogdiana brought with it political and cultural changes, notably the introduction of the Arabic language and script and the Islamic religion. Both these introductions of new linguistic and religious elements meant radical changes in the socio-cultural fabric of Sogdian society.

Further, there were significant socio-cultural changes of a demographic or ‘ethno-linguistic’ nature. Of particular note was the growth in influence of the settled Turkic ethnic groups, and the rise of New Persian as a ‘*lingua franca*’ replacing Sogdian. Accordingly, this chronology represents a period of continuous and significant changes in both the cultural and ethno-linguistic fabric of Sogdiana and the Central Asia as a whole.

3. The genesis of the indigenous Christian culture represented by material evidence and texts.

Despite the period of political instability and dramatic continuous social changes during the fifth-ninth centuries, Christianity in Sogdiana (and elsewhere in the Central Asian region) showed a remarkable vitality, which was expressed among other things in the production of Christian literature and objects of material culture (architecture, liturgical objects and other objects of devotion). This materialization was also balanced by the rapid expansion of Christianity, most possibly through Sogdian agency, into other ‘ethno-linguistic’ milieux, such as the Uighur and Sino-Mongolian.

Each set of surviving evidence exhibits the unique, diverse and complex patterns through which the Syriac-speaking Church of the East was encultured into the Sogdian context or through Sogdian ‘agency’. This enculturation also implied change and innovation in Sogdian culture demonstrated through the adaptation of architectural models, new religious objects, iconographic elements and literary genres.

Main sources of evidence

This dissertation aims to discuss the available material evidence related to Christianity among the Sogdians, gathering it together within a specific methodological framework, in order to build a composite picture of the subject, over and above the dispersed and dislocated approach that pertains in the literature to date.

The material culture evidence considered here includes numismatic, especially group of coins bearing Christian iconography; architectural evidence and assorted small material culture objects either discovered in archaeological digs or acquired in the area. The textual evidence considered is chiefly represented by published Sogdian Christian texts.

The material evidence discussed here has been previously published and discussed in both specialist archaeological reports as well as in generic historical essays on the subject of the history of Christianity in Central Asia.¹⁵ However, previous studies have provided mainly a descriptive examination and functional interpretation of this evidence and have largely treated them as material proof of the presence of Christianity broadly in the Central Asian region. These material culture objects have been used mainly to complement the written primary sources. Consequently, the relationship of these material culture products with their local social and cultural environment and the community that produced and used them has not been addressed.

‘Christian’ material culture of Sogdiana and its contexts

The ‘Christian’ affiliation of the material culture considered in this dissertation has been established by archaeologists and historians on the basis of the functionality and typological properties of these objects; while the relationship of this material evidence with Sogdiana is established on archaeological and historical grounds. That is to say, the objects were either discovered in archaeological strata, or accidentally found or acquired in Sogdiana and are chronologically concurrent with the period of eastward expansion of the Church of the East.

¹⁵ cf. NIKITIN, 1984, pp.121-137; BOGOMOLOV, 1994, pp.71-78; BURYAKOV, 1994, pp. 19-25. The individual publications related to each material culture object where the evidence was discussed will be mentioned further below.

Christianity arrived in Sogdiana from Mesopotamian Persia. As suggested by its geographical position as well as by the material evidence datable to the earliest period, the principal starting point for Christian missions eastwards into Sogdiana from Persia was the city of Marv in Khorasan.¹⁶ In addition, Balkh probably played an important role in the transmission of Christianity into Sogdiana from the South, although material evidence for this is limited.¹⁷ Another possible trajectory came from Herat, which by the sixth century had attained metropolitanate status.¹⁸ On the basis of this historical context therefore, the Christian material culture of Sogdiana may be understood to have evolved under the inspiration of already established types and forms of 'Christian' material culture that were in use in Sassanid Persia. However, within their own hermeneutic or application context these material culture objects are Sogdian; that is they were owned, purchased, commissioned and manufactured by Sogdian Christians who may not necessarily have viewed them as Mesopotamian i.e. foreign to their culture and context.

¹⁶ More discussion is found in HUNTER, 1992, pp. 363-368.

¹⁷ For further discussion see HUNTER, 2009, pp.71-85. More recent discussion of the topic is found in BORBONE, 2013, pp. 441- 465. In early medieval period (ca. 2-6 CA) territory of Balkh or otherwise called Tukharistan included the regions of the Southern Tajikistan and Southern Uzbekistan. From this perspective, Balkh (Greek Bactra) was one of the immediate neighbors of Sogdiana and had linguistic and cultural-racial affinity with Sogdians. The presence of Christian communities in Balkh is witnessed in Xian Stele, in China. The donor of the monument was Yazedbouzid son of the priest Millis, from Balkh.

¹⁸ HUNTER, 1992, pp.365-367. The metropolitan see of Herat was established during the patriarchate of the Timothy I (780-832CE) and was perhaps in reaction to the growth of the Syrian Orthodox community in Herat, that were mainly of the deportees from Edessa. The records of the synods of the Persian Church, otherwise known as the *Synodicon Orientale*, provide reliable information on the organization and spread of Christianity into the East. This document commences with the Synod of Mar Isaac in 410 and up to the Synod of Mar Henanyeshu II (775 CE). (For edition and translation of this source, see CHABOT, 1902. HUNTER, 1992, pp.363-368 provides examination of the data provided by this source in connection with the spread of Christianity eastward into Central Asia.) According to the *Synodicon Orientale* major centers of Christianity in the Eastern Iran, in the medieval period included the cities of Abaršahar (Nišapur), Tus, Marv and Herat. Whilst there is no mention of a bishop from Balkh attending any of the church synods, the bishops of Marv and Herat are listed amongst the signatories of the acts of the synods of the Mar Dādīšo (424 CE), Mar Acacius (486 CE) and Mar Babai (497 CE). (cf. CHABOT, 1902, pp. 285, 299, 310, 311, 315; HUNTER, 1993, pp.556) In addition, the acts of the synod of Mar Aba that took place in 544 CE includes the signatures of the bishops from two more ecclesiastical sees in adjacent regions of Marv, namely Abiward and Marvrud. (CHABOT, 1902, pp.366-367) Ten years after the Synod of Mar Aba, the Synod of Mar Joseph (554 CE) mentioned the metropolitan of Marv. (CHABOT, 1902, pp. 285, 366-367) The later points to a significant growth of Christian communities in the area, because the ecclesiastical see of Marv moved from the bishopric status into that of a metropolinate. As of the time of the synod of Mar Ishoyab in 585 CE, two more bishopric sees are mentioned: Pushang, south of Herat and Badisi located between Marv and Herat. (CHABOT, 1902, pp.423; HUNTER, 1992, pp.366. Other spelling for Badisi in FIEY, 1973, pp.93-95 is Badghes and he claims it to be the domain of the Hephthalites.) The list of the twenty-seven metropolitans of the Church of the East across the Central Asian landmass is also preserved in the 14th century history of Mar Yahballaha.

“[...] 11. le métropolitte de Merv ; 12. le métropolitte de Herat ; 13. le métropolitte de Faṭarbah ; 14. le métropolitte de Chine ; 4 [...] 19. le métropolitte du Ṭabaristan ; [...] 21. le métropolitte de Samarcande ; 22. le métropolitte du Turkestan ; [...] 24. le métropolitte du Siḡistan ; 25. le métropolitte de Khanbaliq et Fāliq ; 26. le métropolitte de Tangut ; 27. le métropolitte de Kašghar et Nuwākīṭ.” For the recent translation and study of Mar Yahballaha where this quote was taken from see BORBONE, 2008, pp.301

Research questions

This dissertation addresses two main questions:

1. What was the profile of ‘Sogdian Christianity?’ (Was it socially and culturally integrated or did it flourish only among expatriate missionaries or tradesmen?)
2. What does the material and manuscript evidence tell us about the enculturation of Syriac Christianity in the Sogdian context?

Research structure

This research is divided into chapters according to the themes and material genres discussed. The chapters are further subdivided into sections highlighting the central thoughts discussed. The research consists of four CHAPTERS, an INTRODUCTION and a CONCLUSION.

The **INTRODUCTION** discusses the subject, aims and methodology of the research.

CHAPTER 1 is dedicated to an ethnographic survey of Sogdians including social, cultural and economic aspects of their history. The focus of the chapter is divided into two subjects: firstly a survey of historical sources and literature on Sogdiana; and secondly the instrumental role of the Sogdians in the transmission of cultural ideas, in particular religions, through the agency of their mercantile skills and language.

CHAPTER 2 examines a group of Sogdian coins bearing Christian iconography, primarily the cross, and asks one overarching question: what does the numismatic evidence reveal about the history and place of Christianity in mediaeval Sogdiana, during the 5th-9th centuries? Over and above their value as monetary products, the prime interest of this chapter is to examine these coins as historical evidence. It explores the role of coins outside their economic context, as the mean of trade or face-value, by placing them into their religious and cultural contexts, thereby revealing their message, representation and role in relation to ‘Sogdian Christianity’.

CHAPTER 3 discusses the available material evidence, comprising architectural and small material culture objects related to Christianity that were either discovered in archaeological strata or accidentally found or acquired in Sogdiana and are chronologically concurrent with the period of eastward expansion of the Church of the East. In the absence of historical texts on the advance of Christianity into Sogdiana, this material evidence is extremely valuable, since it represents a direct local Sogdian image of Christianity as an inherently integrated religion.

CHAPTER 4 aims to explore the philological ‘mechanisms’ used in translating Christian texts into Sogdian. In particular, it aims to show how different Christian theological and

ecclesiological vocabularies were translated from Syriac. Particular emphasis will be given to how the Sogdian Church linguistically contextualized its theological and ecclesiological concepts.

CONCLUSION summarises the findings of the research.

CHAPTER ONE: ETHNOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF SOGDIANA

Introduction

The focus of this chapter is divided into two subjects: firstly a survey of the historical sources and literature on Sogdiana; and secondly the instrumental role the Sogdians played in the transmission of cultural ideas, in particular religions, through the agency of their mercantile skills and language.

Sogdiana in ancient and medieval sources

Sogdiana was an ancient culture of Iranian-speaking people who lived at the edge of the Persian Empire en route to China. Although the Sogdian *oikoumene* [area of cultural influence and demographic spread] extended from Bukhara to Xinjiang, the actual area of Sogdiana was relatively restricted, spanning the modern countries of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. More specifically, it encompassed the provinces of Samarqand, Bukhara and Qarshi in the republic of Uzbekistan and the Sughd province of the republic of Tajikistan.

Although modern scholarship rediscovered Sogdian culture in the late nineteenth century and their language became known in the early decades of the twentieth century, Sogdians were known to history from the Achaemenid Era (6-5 BCE), including the geographical-historical texts of the Arab authors of the tenth century.

The influence of the Sogdian people touched nearly all aspects of life in the Central Asian landmass, including literature, religions, commerce and diplomacy. Over and above being a political entity, the Sogdians founded an intellectual empire, which gave rise to a multifaceted culture, combining diverse cultural and ethno-linguistic elements.

The Sogdians were renowned as merchants *par excellence* on the trade networks connecting the East with the West and the North with the South. However, beyond trade, the Sogdians were purveyors of ‘culture,’ taking advantage of their geopolitical position and using the vehicle of their language to do so.

“Sogdian merchants were the real masters of the Silk Road, whoever the ephemeral powers of the time might be. Under the rule of their fellow Iranian peoples, the Parthians and the Sassanians, Sogdian merchants moved easily in the Iranian lands to the west, where some of them were won over to the Christian message, just as other Sogdians, active in the former Kushan lands, had embraced Buddhism.”¹⁹

¹⁹ FOLTZ, 1999, pp. 68.

Iranian sources

The oldest extant historical reference to Sogdiana is from the Achaemenid era (559-330 BCE). In particular, Sogdiana (Suguda) is mentioned in the tri-lingual (Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian) inscription of the king Darius (Dārayavauš) at Behistun listing the twenty-three countries that were subject to his throne.

“King Darius says: These are the countries which are subject unto me, and by the grace of Ahuramazda I became king of them: Persia, Elam, Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, the countries by the Sea, Lydia, the Greeks, Media, Armenia, Cappadocia, Parthia, Drangiana, Aria, Chorasmia, Bactria, Sogdia, Gandara, Scythia, Sattagydia, Arachosia and Maka; twenty-three lands in all.”²⁰

However, whether the people who occupied the region before its annexation to the Achaemenids were Iranian-speaking or not remains obscure.

The archaeological material reveals that the Iranian identity of the people living in Sogdiana (the Sogdians) had developed subsequent to the inclusion of the region in the Persian Empire, after Cyrus the Great's conquest ca.540 BCE, which was marked by the establishment of Kyrèschata (Cyropolis) in Syr Darya.²¹ Thenceforth, as Pierre Briant has shown Sogdiana remained a province of the Achaemenid Empire and its successor dynasties, being ruled by Greek-Macedonians and later by Iranian-speaking dynasties, including the Parthians and Sassanids.²²

Other Iranian sources mentioning Sogdiana include the Avesta Yt.10.14 where *Suyda* is mentioned to designate both Sogdiana and Sogdians.²³ In addition the compound *Suydo šayana* – meaning ‘the dwelling of Sogdians’ - is also attested (Vd.1, 4).²⁴ Badresaman

²⁰KENT, 1953, pp. 208-209; The Behistun inscription, column 1, lines 9-17 available at <http://www.livius.org/be-bm/behistun/behistun-t02.html#1.9-17> (accessed 03/05/2013)

²¹PYANKOV, 1993, pp. 514-515. The region that afterwards became known as Sogdiana to the Achaemenids was flourishing much earlier than the date of the Behistun inscriptions. This can be seen in evidence deriving from earliest urban centre of Sogdiana, the town of Sarazm (4th-3rd centuries BCE), where agriculture and metallurgy was practised. As (ISAKOV, 1996, pp.1-13) has shown, the ceramic and other material culture of Sarazm connects it with the cultures of its immediate surrounding regions, like that of the Oxus as well as more distant ones such as Baluchistan. Another ancient urban centre known in the archaeology of Sogdiana is Kōk Tepe, which is situated north of the Zarafšān River and dates approximately to the fifteenth century BCE. The earliest archaeological material of Kōk Tepe appears to go back to the Bronze Age. As RAPIN, 2007, pp.29-72 has demonstrated that the Kōk Tepe culture lasted throughout the Iron Age and declined with the rise of Samarqand. Regarding the development and rise of Samarqand, BERNARD, 1996, pp. 334-337, has shown out that the city most likely received its first major fortification as an urban settlement under the Achaemenid administration.

²²BRIANT, 2002, pp. 743-754.

²³CHRISTIAN, 1904, entry 1582.

²⁴CHRISTIAN, 1904, entry 1582. For the discussion of the phrase *Suydo šayana*, see GERSHEVITCH, 1959, pp. 176.

Gharib observes that “in both passages, *syūda* is closely associated with Gava, which has been taken as being the designation of “Sogdiana” (Yt.10, 15).”²⁵

The multilingual inscription of the Sassanid king, Shapur I (241-272 CE) inscribed on the wall of *Ka'ba-ye Zardošt* at *Naqš-e Rostam* in Fars, following the model of Darius, also lists Sogdiana “together with Kušan, Kāš, and Š's (Tashkent)” as one of his subjugated lands.²⁶ “It occurs in the Parthian and also in the Greek version of the inscription. Thus the Parthian version (line 2), reads, kwšn hšt(r) [H](N prh)š L pškbwr W HN L k's swgd W š's [s....] m[rz]. The Greek version of the same inscription has sōdikēnēs.”²⁷

Over and above any political subjectivity, the Achaemenid and Sassanid royal inscriptions indicate the socio-cultural affiliation of Sogdiana and its adjoining regions within the wider Iranian imperial context of that time. In other words, these inscriptions demonstrate the ethno-cultural and as well as linguistic identity of Sogdiana as being an integral part of Iranian culture.

Greek sources

Several Greek works also mention Sogdiana (Σογδιανή). Particularly valuable among Greek sources is Strabo's *Geography* that designates the geographical location of Sogdiana between the Oxus and the Jaxartes rivers.²⁸ Additionally, he supplies valuable information about the demographic spread of the Sogdians and their language. He states that “...the name of Ariana is further extended to a part of Persia and of Media, as also to the Bactrians and Sogdians on the north; for these speak approximately the same language, with but slight variations.”²⁹ Other Greek sources mentioning Sogdiana give either a brief geographical description or episodes related to the political history of the Persian Empire, of which Sogdiana was a part.³⁰

Arabic sources

In Arabic historical-geographical writing of the ninth-eleventh centuries Sogdiana is designated by the generic term Al Soghd (الصغد) and is understood as a designation of both the

²⁵ GHARIB, 1969, pp. 68.

²⁶ GHARIB, 1969, pp. 67-68.

²⁷ GHARIB, 1969, pp. 67-68.

²⁸ HAMILTON & FALCONER, 1903-1906 II, pp.73, XI, pp.516

²⁹ HAMILTON & FALCONER, 1903-1906, XV, II, pp. 143.

³⁰ Herodotus' history mentions Sogdiana as one of the satrapies of the Achaemenid Empires and in accounts of Persian and Roman wars Sogdiana, there is said to supplying troops. Ptolemy, similar to Strabo provides geographical description of Sogdiana. More information on these can be found in PAULY-WISSOWA, 1927, pp. 788-791; MARQUART, 1946.

region and the people in Mā-warā’-’al-nahr (‘what lies beyond the river’).³¹ The Arabic sources provide varied information regarding the cities comprising Sogdiana. According to Ahmad al- Yaqubi, a ninth century writer, in his famous *Kitab al-Buldan* (Book of the Countries), Sogdiana included Keš, Nasaf and Samarqand.³² The tenth century writer Abu Ishaq al-Istakhri in his *Al-masaalik wa-al-mamaalik* (Traditions of Countries) recorded that Sogdiana comprised regions located east of Bukhara from Dabusia to Samarqand. Al-Istakhri also pointed out that other authors include also Bukhara, Keš and Nasaf as principal cities of Sogdiana.³³ In contrast to the abovementioned, Abū Rayhān al-Bīrūnī, the eleventh century Chorasmian polymath, “whose information on the Sogdian calendar and the existence of the Sogdian language is most instructive” does not give any geographical designation of Sogdiana.³⁴ Nevertheless, despite their inconsistencies as to which cities constituted the Sogdian federation, the Arabic sources name the major Sogdian principalities, such as Samarqand, Bukhara and Keš- the main ‘capital cities’ of Eastern, Western and Southern Sogdiana.³⁵

European scholarship: Rediscovering Sogdiana

Sogdiana was introduced by Wilhelm Tomaschek in 1876 into European scholarship in his famous book with the same title. Tomaschek’s *Sogdiana* was more than a historical account; it provided a comprehensive assessment of existing sources about the culture, ethnography, language and literature of Sogdians. In particular, he described Sogdiana as “the oldest abode of the culture, where Iranian national life raised itself from the original nomadic-patriarchal mode of life to a more highly developed political existence and complicated state circumstances.”³⁶

³¹ BARTHOLD, 1937, pp. 473

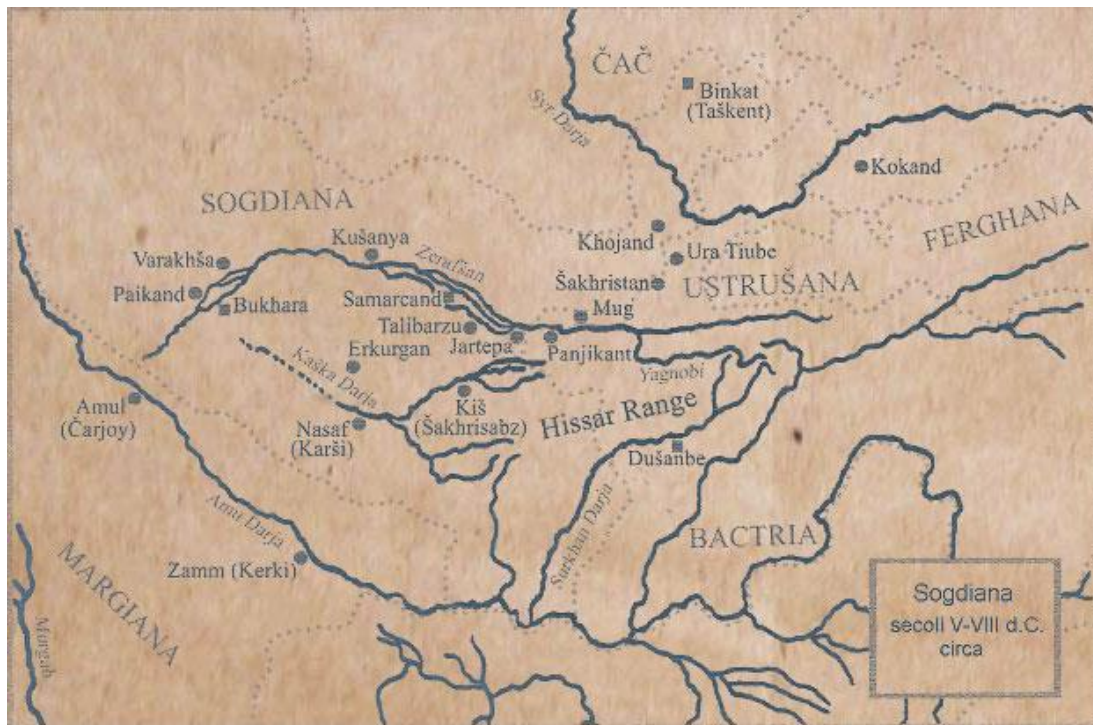
³² His list of the cities comprising Sogdiana excludes Bukhara. In addition, he designates both Samarqand and Keš as capital cities. DE GOEJE, 1938-39, vol. 4; KRACHKOVSKIY, 1957.

³³ DE GOEJE, 1938-1939, vol. 1; KRACHKOVSKIY, 1957.

³⁴ GHARIB, 1969, pp. 69, For Al-Bīrūnī’s accounts on Sogdians see SACHAU, 1879, pp. 56, 220

³⁵ Compare the text of Yaqubi and Istakhri in their descriptions of the Al Sughd. See: DE GOEJE, 1938-39, vol. IV, pp. 292-293; DE GOEJE, vol. 1. pp. 314, 316.

³⁶ TOMASCHEK, 1877, pp. 73.



Map 1: Sogdiana; reproduced after Tomaschek, 1877



Map 2: Central Asia: Sogdiana, reproduced after Vaissière, 2005

Sogdiana: Economy, society and cultural aspects

As far as is known, Sogdiana was neither an empire with a centralized state nor a society governed by one monarch. Instead, Sogdiana appears to have been a federation of semi-autonomous principalities or city-states, each with a semi-independent ruler. The city of Samarqand was traditionally viewed as the capital of Sogdiana with its ruler being, 'first among equals'.³⁷ The Sogdian *city-states* developed independently; their rulers were drawn from the local nobility, though they often "ow[ed] allegiance to a more powerful ruler"³⁸ of other neighbouring nations, such as China.³⁹ The local Sogdian ruling nobility, as attested by Sogdian coins and literary records bore the titles of *eḵšīd* (𐰽𐰺𐰍𐰏) and *afšīn*.⁴⁰

Located on the fertile river basins, the basis of the Sogdian economy was agriculture. The lands were irrigated through artificial canals connected to the Zarafšān or Syr Darya rivers. Accordingly, the land-owning aristocracy, *dihqāns*, had the leading part in the Sogdian hierarchy. As demonstrated in Olga Smirnova's study of Sogdian socio-economic life, the following social strata: 'ztkr-'nobility', γw'kr- 'merchants' and k'rykr- 'workers' were integrated into the local economy.⁴¹ Furthermore, "there was an institution peculiar to Central Asia, especially in Sogdiana, that of the *chakar*-military slave or servant."⁴² The local Sogdian rulers may have employed *chakars* for military services and personal defence or militias.⁴³ According to Boris Marshak the recognition of the importance of the merchant class or 'money aristocracy,' who were "placed socially and politically between the nobility and the 'workers,' according to their actual significance" indicates that Sogdiana was not a

³⁷MARSHAK, 2001 (a), pp.231, 2001(b), pp. 13; FRYE, 1996, pp.185.

³⁸MARSHAK, 2001 (a), pp.231.

³⁹CHAVANNESS, 1903, pp. 135-136. The *Tang huiyao* 唐會要, 1998, 99.1774, 1777 in the description of the countries of Kang 康 (Samarqand) and Shi 史 (Kisš), narrates that in the third year of the Xianqing 顯慶 era (658, after the Tang victory over the Western Turks), emperor Gaozong sent a military commander named Dong Jisheng 董寄生 to these two countries and appointed the respective sovereigns as Chinese (nominal) vassals. It is believed that the first Sogdian vassal appointed by Tang administration was Varkhuman (Avarumān) the king of Samarqand. A more interesting piece of information is included in another section of the same work (The *Tang huiyao* 唐會要, 1998, 36.656), according to which "since the Western Regions had been completely pacified, the emperor sent envoys separately to Samarkand as well as to Tokhāristān and the other countries [of those regions] to inquire about their costumes and products as well as the institutions past and present, to draw illustrations and present [the results of the inquiry to the throne]". The precise date for this event is given to be 14 June 658 CE. See also STARK, 2009, pp. 8-10.

⁴⁰SMIRNOVA, 1970, pp.22-23; FRYE, 1996, pp.195. The title *eḵšīd* however, more commonly in numismatic material was designated by the Aramaic ideogram MLK' - 'king'. The use of another Aramaic ideogram MR'Y on coinage is usually understood to be equivalent of *afšīn* 'lord'. For example, the title of the Dēwāšīč, as attested in Mugh documents was *sywōdyk MLK' sm'rkndc MR'Y* - 'king of Sogd, lord of Samarkand'. LIVSHITS, 1962, pp. 56. The title of *afšīn* was commonly born by the rulers of Osrušana.

⁴¹SMIRNOVA, 1970, pp.38-68.

⁴²FRYE, 1996, pp.194; SMIRNOVA, 1970, pp.22-24. VAISSIÈRE, 2003, pp. 23-27, *ibid*, 2005b, pp.139-149 have suggested that a more precise role of *chakar* would be that of a professional soldier recruited into for various military purposes.

⁴³VAISSIÈRE, 2005b, pp.139-149.

feudal society.⁴⁴ In other words it had a ‘free market’ climate. The ‘monopoly’ of these economies, such as land, both within the city limits as well as in the mountainous regions, was controlled by the nobility or *dihqāns*. There was also a special category of land designated as *prōyz* ‘paradise’ that was used as recreation gardens or hunting parks, which also belonged to the *dihqāns*.⁴⁵ Land and other assets owned by the nobility, such as mills and workshops were rented to the ‘landless’ farmers- *ktyβrs* and or to craftsmen.⁴⁶

In addition to agriculture, the Sogdian economy depended on trade, both local and long-distance. Whilst the origins of Sogdian trade cannot be pinpointed precisely, it is thought that their commercial activities extended as far back as the Achaemenid Era.⁴⁷ Part of the difficulty in ascertaining the origins of Sogdian commerce is that it can only be gleaned in part from the Sogdian sources, but is mainly understood from the information supplied by Chinese texts and material culture products of Sogdian provenance discovered in China.⁴⁸ The only Sogdian text containing some information on the commercial activity of Sogdians, particularly in China, is the ‘Letter II’ of the so-called collection of Ancient Letters datable to 313 CE. According to Étienne de La Vaissière this particular letter “is one of the only documents proving the existence of a Sogdian *network*, and not simply an aggregate of petty Sogdian merchants, with all that the notion of network implies in terms of an economic and social structure intended to control commercial operations at a distance.”⁴⁹

⁴⁴ MARSHAK, 2001 (a), pp.230-232.

⁴⁵ On the references to ‘paradises’ in Sogdiana see TOMASCHEK, 1877, pp. 80; ESHONKULOV, 2007. In addition, the Sogdian document A5 from Mugh mountain mentions *prōyzpt*, literary meaning the head or director of the paradise, which alludes to the fact that Dēwāštīč may have owned a paradise in certain mountainous area of Panjikent or beyond. See LIVSHTITS, 1962, pp. 181.

⁴⁶ SMIRNOVA, 1970, pp.102-103, 112-114.

⁴⁷ The ‘Charter of Susa’ an inscription of the Achaemenid king records supply of particular gem stones from Sogdiana. Although the place of origin of these gems and the reasons as of why and how, under what capacity these gems were supplied are still obscure, however this records might be the earliest reference to involvement of Sogdians in trade. For the discussion of the earliest involvement of Sogdians in distant trade see: VAISSIÈRE, 2005, pp. 20-24, that discusses the mentioned episode in greater detail.

⁴⁸ One of the frequently mentioned episodes is that recorded in *New Tang History* “*Men of Sogdiana have gone wherever profit is to be found.*” PULLEYBLANK, 1952, pp. 317. The other tall stories about Sogdian traders or their skills mentioned in Chinese records is that cited by WATSON, 1983, pp.553 “Anecdotes were rife on the Sogdians’ sharpness: that at birth honey was put in their mouths and gum on their hands, that they learned the trade from the age of five, that on reaching their twelfth year they were sent to do business in a neighboring state.”

⁴⁹ VAISSIÈRE, 2005, pp. 43 much of the chapter 2 of this work concentrates on the discussion of these letters.

Cultural aspects

Language

As an ethnic group, the Sogdians were an Eastern Iranian nation, whose language also was called Sogdian. According to the Sogdian literary sources, the Sogdians referred to themselves as *swγdyk*, *swγdy'nk* and *sywdyk*. Their language belongs to the eastern branch of the Middle Iranian language group.⁵⁰ However, Sogdian orthography derives from a Semitic language, namely Aramaic, whose script was the main writing system of the Persian Empire during the Achaemenid Era. Consequently, the origins of Sogdian orthography may have developed from the time of Sogdiana's annexation to the Persian Empire under the Achaemenid dynasty.⁵¹

From the stylistic perspective Sogdian shares many features with scripts of other Iranian languages, including Pahlavi, Parthian and Chorasmian.⁵² The oldest known Sogdian writings are short inscriptions, such as an inscription on a shard of pottery discovered at the site of Afrāsiāb; the writing consists of two words, personal names, and is datable to the “the end of Greek rule at the end of the second century BC”.⁵³ Other ancient Sogdian writings include legends on Sogdian coins of 200-130 BCE minted by an anonymous Sogdian king, which in Sogdian numismatics are well-known as ‘Archer coins’ after their iconography,⁵⁴ an inscription on the seal from Er-Kurgan (South Sogdiana) and an epigraphic corpus of the Upper Indus.⁵⁵

The oldest Sogdian text of any substantial length that allows for the examination of the development of Sogdian orthography is the inscription found at Kultobe.⁵⁶ On the basis of its

⁵⁰For overview of the Iranian languages and place of Sogdian in ‘Middle Iranian language group’, including the bibliography in this subject see SKJÆRVØ, 2006, pp. 503-504; SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1996.

⁵¹Sogdiana was conquered by Cyrus the Great *circa* 540 BCE, marked by the establishment of Kyrèschata (Cyropolis) in Syr Darya. For this archaeological site, see PYANKOV, 1993, pp. 514-515.

⁵²The similarities can be presence of 22 letters in alphabet and use of the Aramaic ideograms like *bry* ‘my son’ etc.

⁵³GRENET, 2006, pp. 223. The detailed examination of the inscription, including its archeological context is found in GRENET, 2006, pp. 223-230.

⁵⁴The inscription on the ‘archer coins’ contains personal names (?), such as *'štam*, *βywrtv* and *hprwnh* and it is possible that different names indicates different series in this coin group. Detailed information, including bibliography on these coins is found in ZEYMAL, 1983, p. 250-251. For other oldest Sogdian (Aramaic) inscriptions on coin legends from Central Asia see MITCHNER, 1973, pp. 26-27.

⁵⁵The Sogdian inscriptions of the Upper Indus are examined in SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1989c; *ibid*, 1992d, *ibid*, 2000, pp.523-541.

⁵⁶Kultobe - is a place name in Turkistan region in South Kazakhstan where the Sogdian inscriptions were discovered. For archaeological analysis, see PODUSHKIN, 2005, pp.133-139. For translation, linguistic and historical commentaries see SIMS-WILLIAMS & GRENET, 2006, pp.95-111.

archaic orthographic features⁵⁷ and use of certain ideograms unattested in currently known Sogdian texts,⁵⁸ the Kultobe inscription is believed to be significantly earlier than the other ‘ancient’ Sogdian texts, such as *Ancient Letters* (313 CE).⁵⁹

The overwhelming majority of lengthy written material in Sogdian is represented by the religious texts of Manicheans, Christians and Buddhists. These manuscripts were most probably produced between the 9th and 13th centuries (most likely re-produced from the manuscripts of the earlier centuries). The second largest quantity of written material in Sogdian is the ‘secular’ texts comprising letters, juridical and legal documents.⁶⁰

The extant Sogdian texts reveal the use of several Aramaic-based orthographies in Sogdian that most probably were conditioned by the literary contexts in which these scripts were used. The diversity of scripts or orthography in these textual categories is remarkable since each of them is written in a distinctive script.⁶¹ The so called Sogdian original or cursive script was used primarily for writing Buddhist and secular as well as to a certain extent Christian and Manichean texts. However, the majority of Sogdian Christian texts were written in Syriac script (with some modifications), which was the official script of the Church of the East. The Manichean script by contrast, “follows most of the general historical conventions of the native [Sogdian] script,” which is evident in the shape of the letters.⁶²

Religions

The surviving archaeological, ethnographic evidence and textual records represent Sogdiana as a diverse society. The primary evidence on religious life in Sogdiana is their religious literature as well as religious material culture objects and architecture, which show the coexistence of various religions and forms of religiosity. This ‘relaxed’ religious milieu of

⁵⁷ SIMS-WILLIAMS & GRENET, 2006, pp. 95. Particularly shapes of the letters γ/G, y, p, c/\$ and š. “On the other hand, some letters have an unexpected form, like the *s* and *t*, both of which are frequently written in two parts.”

⁵⁸ e.g. ZY representing the Sogdian enclitic particle –*ti*, to mark the beginning of a new clause for details see: SIMS-WILLIAMS & GRENET, 2006, pp. 95.

⁵⁹ This name is conventionally applied to a group of Sogdian documents; mainly letters, discovered in 1907 by Sir Aurel Stein in the ruined watchtower on the Chinese frontier wall, which formerly guarded the route between Dunhuang and Loulan. For brief background description on these documents, see SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985b, pp. 7-9. For the edition of some of these documents see SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2001, *ibid*, 2005.

⁶⁰ It is of interest to note majority of juridical and economic documents in Sogdian were discovered in the historical home of Sogdian. This text corpus is commonly known as Mount Mugh Documents designated by their find spot in the ruin of a fortress in Mugh Mountain, North Tajikistan. The most recent discovery of Sogdian texts in Tajikistan are the economic texts from Hisorak citadel (Martshkat) in 2011. Publication is found in LURJE, 2012, pp. 433-460.

⁶¹ This ‘distinctive script’ however was not probably a rule. Among Sogdian religious texts there are however also manuscripts written in either scripts, such as Manichean fragments written both in Manichean Sogdian and Sogdian cursive or Sogdian Christian fragments written in adapted Syriac as well as in Sogdian cursive.

⁶² DURKIN-MEISTERERNST 2000, pp. 161-178.

Sogdiana was probably conditioned by its geopolitical position. On the one hand, since Sogdiana was located beyond the territory of the influence of the ‘orthodox’ Zoroastrianism practiced in Iran proper, Sogdian Zoroastrian practices developed around various local deities without a primary deity, such as Ahuramazda or institutionalised office of the high priest. On the other hand, being located on the crossroads of the major trade routes meant that Sogdiana was a ‘melting pot’ of religions imported from far and near. Furthermore, the absence of centralized ideological control may also be posited to have contributed to the flourishing and tolerance of a variety of religions. Whereas in Iran proper the monarch determined its religious profile, Sogdiana being ruled by several semi-autonomous rulers did not possess a ‘state religion’ of any kind. Nonetheless, religion was important to Sogdians and played a significant role in their culture and society as a whole. The best demonstration of the role and significance of ‘spiritual culture’ in Sogdiana are the murals, dated between the fifth-eighth centuries, discovered in houses, temples and palaces in different principalities of Sogdiana. Many of these murals depict religious motifs, including fables and tales that were communicated in religious literature.⁶³

Additionally, the actual existence of various religious practices, Buddhism, Manichaeism and Christianity among the Sogdians is proved by the diverse body of religious texts as well the variety of material culture objects related to these religions.⁶⁴ However, the material evidence possibly suggests that some of these religions flourished and were popular only among the Sogdians living outside their ‘historical’ home-country, in communities in the Semirechye region or in China. Traces of Buddhism in Sogdiana proper are very scarce, and are chiefly represented by a bronze statue of the Bodhisattva Avolkitesvara from Samarkand⁶⁵ and only one painted representation of the Buddha from Panjikent.⁶⁶ On the other hand, the numerous Sogdian Buddhist texts discovered in Chinese Turkestan, combined with records of the Chinese chronicles and archaeological evidence all seem to indicate the dominant presence of Buddhism amongst Sogdians living in the diaspora. This phenomenon is also reinforced by manuscript colophons that cite Dunhuang and Turfan as their place of production, where considerable Sogdian communities lived.⁶⁷ This example is also applicable to the Sogdian

⁶³ MARSHAK, 2009, pp.24-25.

⁶⁴ It must be repeated that religious texts in Sogdian are found only in the ‘Sogdian diaspora,’ that is regions where Sogdian communities lived outside of Sogdiana. The majority of material culture objects pertaining to religions were discovered during archaeological research in Sogdiana proper.

⁶⁵ KAREV, 1998, pp. 108-117.

⁶⁶ MARSHAK & RASPOPOVA, 1990, pp. 123-176, *ibid*, 1997/98, pp. 297-305.

⁶⁷ TREMBLAY, 2007, pp. 91 notes that the colophon of the *P.2* indicates it being copied in Chang’an, whilst the *P. 8* at Dunhuang etc.

communities that lived in Semirechye.⁶⁸ This is primarily manifested through ‘Buddhist’ material culture, such as architecture, coroplastic and epigraphic materials which were discovered in Sogdian settlements in Semirechye, notably at the sites of Aq-Beshim (Sūyāb) and Krasnaya Rechka.⁶⁹

As shown by the majority of the archaeological evidence, Zoroastrianism was the dominant religion in Sogdiana proper, but Christianity also had a significant presence.⁷⁰ The exact timeline when Christianity was disseminated in Sogdiana cannot be set out for certain. However, the surviving material and textual evidence suggests that by the sixth-seventh centuries it was already well established and this appears to correspond to the elevation of Samarqand, the capital city of Sogdiana to a metropolitanate. The primary sources disagree as to when this actually took place. Some sources place it as early as the fifth century under the Patriarch Ahai (410-414 CE), whilst some others point to a later period between the sixth and eighth centuries under the Patriarchs Shila (503-523 CE), Isho‘yahb – either Isho‘yahb I (582-596 CE), Isho‘yahb II (628-646 CE), or Isho‘yahb III (650-658 CE) – and Saliba-Zakha (714-728 CE).⁷¹ The Eastern Syriac writers, such as Ibn al-Tayyib (1043 CE) and Abdisho bar Berikha (1290 CE) place the creation of the Samarqand metropolitanate between the sixth-eighth centuries.⁷²

Irrespective of the exact date of the establishment of the metropolitanate of Samarqand, the spread of Christianity into Sogdiana was integral to the overall mission of the Church of the East beyond the Iranian plateau. Second century sources, notably the Book of the Laws of the Countries by Bardaisan of Edessa, reveal that Christianity had reached Parthia and Bactria.⁷³ Whilst the origins and advent of Christianity in Sogdiana remain enigmatic, it is feasible to suggest that the region was part of this wider initiative of the Church of the East to spread the Christian faith further east.

Some of the earliest reliable Syriac sources which allow some insight into the spread of Christianity into the wider geographical context of Sogdiana, are the records of the Synods

⁶⁸For a general survey and bibliography, see COMPARETI, 2008, pp. 1-42. A detailed analysis of Buddhism among Sogdians can be found in CHAVANNES, 1903, pp. 135; MKRTYCHEV, 2002, pp.56-64. For Buddhism among Sogdians in the diaspora see WALTER, 2006, pp. 1-66; ZHANG, 2002, pp.75-79.

⁶⁹For assessment of the research on Buddhism in Central Asia, including bibliography references to the existing literature see LITVINSKIY, 2001, pp. 188-199. A more recent survey of the Buddhism in Semirechye, including relevant bibliography on the subject is found in GORYACHEVA, 2003 available at http://www.history.krsu.edu.kg/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=169 (accessed 06/05/13).

⁷⁰Pertinent bibliography on the Sogdian Zoroastrianism can be found in SHKODA, 2009, which discusses the questions of the religious life and practices in Sogdiana based on the study of Panjikent temples. SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2000, pp.1-12 is also a useful survey on the topic.

⁷¹COLLESS 1986, pp.51-57; DAUVILLIER, 1948, pp. 283-86.

⁷²MAI, 1838, pp.141-142, 146; HOENERBACH & SPIES, 1956-57, pp. 123.

⁷³DRIJVERS, 1964, pp.59-61.

held by the Church of the East, commencing with the *Synod of Isaac* in 410 CE.⁷⁴ Known by its French title, *Synodicon Orientale*, this source holds the signatures of the bishops and metropolitans who attended these synods - including those from Central Asian seats. Over the centuries, these signatory listings have provided vital information as to the demographic spread of the Church of the East, but are not without shortcomings. In particular, they may not be a completely reliable source of information about the spread of the Church of the East since the metropolitanates 'of the exterior' were exempted from attendance.⁷⁵ Thus a synod may not have a signature of bishops from certain places in certain years, but that does not mean the absence of a bishopric there. Another difficulty arises from the merging of bishoprics where it is not clear how the combination functioned.⁷⁶

For the background history of 'Sogdian Christianity' one of the most interesting sources is the *Life of Baršabbā*, a document narrating the evangelization of Marv, a major city on the Sassanian border standing half-way to Bukhara, a major cultural centre in Western Sogdiana.⁷⁷ This document is extant in two manuscripts unearthed at Turfan, in Sogdian and Syriac.⁷⁸ In particular, the Sogdian fragment credits *Baršabbā* with the foundation of monasteries in areas of Fārs, Gorgān, Tūs, Abaršahr, Saraks, Marvud, Balkh, Herat, and Sīstān.⁷⁹ The activity of *Baršabbā* is also known from the accounts of the Muslim polymath al-Bīrūnī writing in the 11th century who, in his text on calendars of Christians, mentions the commemoration day of *Baršabbā* as a founder of Christianity in the region and indicates that Christianity was spread in the area two hundred years after Christ.⁸⁰

Although the historicity of *Baršabbā* as the first bishop of Marv is difficult to establish, a bishop under that name appears on the list of the signatories of the synod of Mar Dadišo in

⁷⁴ CHABOT, 1902. The synodical records included begin with the Synod of Mar Isaac (410 CE) and end with that of Hnanisho II (775 CE). After an introduction, Chabot presents the Syriac texts together with a detailed annotated French translation. It also indices: personal names (Syriac), place names (Syriac), personal names (French), place names (French), and subjects (French). Author, has also provided a list of a Persian words occurring in the Syriac text, which is valuable in understanding the two-directional relationship of Syriac and Persian in the life of the Church of the East in Persia.

⁷⁵ DAUVILLIER, 1956, pp.76-87.

⁷⁶ The situation of merging two bishoprics together is given in examples of Marv and Heart. Discussions are found in HUNTER, 1992, pp.364-365.

⁷⁷ For an outline of Christianity in Marv see HUNTER, 1992, pp.364-365.

⁷⁸ MÜLLER & LENTZ, 1934, pp. 522-528 (Sogdian), 559-564 (Syriac); SUNDERMANN, 1975, pp. 70-71, 73. His commemoration in liturgy is attested in Syriac manuscript MIK III/45folios 7R-13R). It is of interest to note that his commemoration date was joined with that of Mart Shir (Queen Shirin) and another female saint Mart Zarvandokht.

⁷⁹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1989, pp. 823.

⁸⁰ BĪRŪNĪ, 1957, pp.330.

424 CE.⁸¹ Sebastian Brock in his examination of the Syriac sources of the *Life of Baršabbā* has concluded:

“[t]he very existence of this *Life of Baršabbā* is of interest, since it shows that *Baršabbā* under two different names *Mar Šaba* and *Baršabbā* was venerated in subsequent centuries by all three Syriac ecclesial communities, Church of the East, Melkite and Syrian Orthodox.”⁸²

The archaeological material discovered from the region of Marv confirms the significant presence of Christians in the area already from the third century.⁸³ The material evidence includes architectural structures, burial grounds and many other small material culture objects e.g. pendant crosses.⁸⁴ In light of the situation at Marv, where there was already a significant growth of Christian activity in the region starting from the third century; and the fact that the ecclesiastical see of Marv may have been represented in synods of the Church of the East from the 424 CE, it could be suggested that the Sogdians were evangelized no later than the fourth century.⁸⁵

The existing textual evidence on the history of Christianity in different regions of Central Asia, including the material culture objects deriving from the region itself, point to the fact that prior to the arrival of Roman Catholic, Latin speaking missionaries in late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, the only Christian communities living in the region were representatives of the various Syriac-speaking Churches.⁸⁶ These are:

1. *The Church of the East*. Otherwise called ‘Nestorian.’⁸⁷ The Church of the East was an important church in the Sassanid Empire as well as during the Arab Caliphate and was based in Seleucia-Ctesiphon and Baghdad respectively. It was the dominant expression of Christianity in Central Asia and China until the 14th century, when the ravages of Tamerlane reduced its dioceses to enclaves in Kurdistan and northern Iran.
2. *The Syriac Orthodox Church*. Also known as ‘Jacobite’, a branch of the Syriac-speaking Church that employed the Western Syriac dialect for its liturgy and writing.

⁸¹ CHABOT, 1902, pp. 273, 276, 285.

⁸² BROCK, 1995, pp. 201.

⁸³ KOSHELENKO *et al*, 1995, pp. 60-70.

⁸⁴ A comprehensive survey of the history of Christianity in Marv region including bibliographic references are found in KOSHELENKO *et al*, 1996, pp. 85-95.

⁸⁵ The first synodical record mentioning the bishop of Marv is found in CHABOT, 1902, pp. 285, 299, 310-311, 315 another two synodical records mentioning Marv are synod of 486 and 497 CE.

⁸⁶ The concise descriptions of these and other Syriac Christian traditions including references to the relevant scholarships about them can be found in BROCK *et al*, 2011.

⁸⁷ The discussion about the use of this term in current scholarship and existing debates on its accuracy in connection with ‘Christianity in China and Central Asia’ is found in HALBERTSMA, 2008, pp.3-12. The term was discussed in Salzburg-2003, the conferences dedicated to the history of Church of the East in China and Central Asia, where scholars decided to use Church of the East henceforth.

3. *The Syriac-speaking Greek Orthodox*. Known as ‘Melkites’ (from Syriac *malka*-meaning ‘king’), they adhered to the Chalcedonian Creed and used the Greek language in their liturgy.

Sogdians outside their homeland

In spite of the continuous political shifts and devastating wars of the third-fourth centuries, Sogdiana in the fifth-sixth centuries, as revealed through archaeology, experienced rapid agricultural and urban growth, which was the impetus for many Sogdians to search for suitable new lands to farm outside their home country.⁸⁸

Literary accounts and archaeological data indicate that the Sogdians primarily emigrated eastward along the routes leading to China, through Semirechye, the Chu river basin in Kyrgyzstan, which led further east to Turfan, Dunhuang and the Tang dynasty’s imperial capital at Chang’an (modern Xian). Traces of their commercial activity have also been found in the Upper Indus, reflected on rock inscriptions in Sogdian⁸⁹ and recorded by Menander the Protector, who describes the development of diplomatic and trade relations between Byzantium, Persia and China. These western ventures, however, had both a trade and diplomatic character over and above resettlement.⁹⁰ By contrast, their eastward movement was that of resettlement; the Sogdians immigrated to settle and live in the regions beyond the original boundaries of their home country. Their settlements were mainly on trade routes.

Čač

The closest area (in terms of distance) where Sogdians began to spread their socio-cultural influence was the Čač oasis (late fifth - early sixth centuries CE). As was mentioned earlier, Čač was the last frontier of the kingdom of Šāpūr I (241-272 CE), which was named in his inscription on the Ka’ba-ye Zardošt at Naqš-e Rostam.⁹¹ The significance of the influence of the Sogdian economy in Čač is reflected in numismatic and architectural evidence datable to the sixth-seventh centuries.⁹² The political structure of Čač, judging by the names of the rulers on the coinage was also similar to that of Sogdiana, since it was ruled by several

⁸⁸ The issue of the migration of Sogdians outside their homeland has been discussed in Russian scholarship. The more recent comprehensive survey of the subject in English is found in VAISSIÈRE, 2005, pp. 97-106.

⁸⁹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1992d, *ibid*, 1993, pp. 151-163.

⁹⁰ The exploration of Menander’s account is found in PIGULEVSKAYA, 1951, pp. 68-73 in relation to the trade connections between Byzantine, India, Persia, Central Asia and China

⁹¹ Examination of the inscription is found in MARICQ, 1958, pp. 295-360.

⁹² A study of the Čač coinage is found in RTVELADZE, 1982, pp. 31-99, *ibid*, 1997, pp. 46-50. The interrelationship of the spread of Sogdian culture into Čač in the context of urban development and trade is discussed in BURJAKOV, 1990, pp. 82-100.

different princes bearing the Sogdian title of *xwb* 'lord'.⁹³ The majority of the coins issued in Čač bear Sogdian legends, with the exception of some very rare coins with the inscription *tdwn*, which would have been issued by a Turkic ruler.⁹⁴

Otrar and Semirechye

Beyond Čač, the presence and influence of Sogdians is observed in Otrar, located to the northwest, and Semirechye, located to the northeast of Čač. The earliest Sogdian settlement in Semirechye was possibly established in the Arys River valley, south of the modern-day Chimkent in the Kangju (康居) period (2nd century BCE to 3rd century CE). This is attested by the earlier indicated epigraphic evidence from Kultobe. The inscription, on a fired plaque (brick) commemorates the founding of a certain city in the domain of the tent-dwellers (*wδ'nn'p*)⁹⁵ by the lords of the Sogdian cities of Samarqand (*smyrkntc MR'Y*), Kish (*k[š'nyk MR'Y]*), Nakhshab (*nxšpyk MR'Y*) and Bukhara (*nwkmy[tn MR'Y]*).⁹⁶

The episode indicated by the Kultobe inscription echoes the political (military) expansion of the Sogdians into the steppe, an assumption that is supported by the mention of the *c'c'nm'pc sp'δny* 'leader of the army of the people of Čač'.⁹⁷ In other words, this inscription indicates that Sogdians went there accompanied by the army supplied by the lord of Čač. What is not very clear though is whether the city commemorated in the Kultobe plaque was founded afresh or whether an existing city was taken over. The name of the city is missing from the inscription.

The circumstances of the Kultobe episode may be parallel to those found in Narshakhi on the foundation of the city of Ḥamūkat, which was founded as a result of the 'migration' of political refugees from Sogdiana.

After the lapse of some time, as Abrūī grew powerful, he exercised tyranny such that the inhabitants of the district could not stand it. The dihqāns and the rich (merchants) fled from this district and went to Turkistān and Ṭarāz where they built a city. They

⁹³ FILANOVICH, 1982, pp. 31-33.

⁹⁴ RTVELADZE, 1982, pp. 39. The influence of the Turkic culture is also present in the monetary iconography as well. This is especially evident in the depiction of facial features and headdress of the rulers (?) depicted on coins. Judging by the onomastic data provided by coins as well as the Sogdian texts in Panjikent there were rulers of Turkic origin.

⁹⁵ SIMS-WILLIAMS & GRENET, 2006, pp. 100. Formed from *wδ'n-* 'tent' and *n'p-* 'people'. The word for 'tent' in Sogdian is well known in the form *wy'n-* borrowed from Middle Persian. The compound *wδ'nn'p* may be equated to that of Parthian *wd'nm'n* and Manichean Middle Persian *wy'nm'n* literary meaning 'tent-dweller' that is nomad.

⁹⁶ SIMS-WILLIAMS & GRENET, 2006, pp. 100-101.

⁹⁷ SIMS-WILLIAMS & GRENET, 2006, pp. 96-107.

called the city Ḥamūkat because the great dihqān, who was chief of the band which had fled, was called Ḥamūk.⁹⁸

The influence of Sogdians in Otrar, Semirechye and beyond harply increases from the sixth century, and coincides with the rise of the Türk Empire.⁹⁹ The distinguishing mark of Sogdian settlements in Semirechye is urban development coupled with the growth of agriculture; a combination that attests the development of sedentary culture. These elements (urban development and agriculture) are notably exemplified by the sites of Sūyāb and Navaket, where the towns were built around castles of the Sogdian model.¹⁰⁰ Although these Sogdian cities undoubtedly contributed to the development of trade (many of the settlements perhaps had markets, inns and various workshops as part of the urban culture), their locations were often situated at less than twelve kilometres from each other, indicating that these were primarily agricultural settlements.¹⁰¹

The influx of Sogdian communities was accompanied by a corresponding growth of cultural influence.¹⁰² The phenomenon was noted in the region of Semirechye by Xuanzang, who around 630 CE *en route* to India in search of Buddhist texts, travelled through the entire region from the Issyk Kul to Samarkand. He recorded the following:

From the town of the Suye 素葉 river [Sūyāb] as far as the Jieshuangna 羯霜那 country [Kesh] the land is called Suli 率利 [Sogdiana], and the people are by the same name. The literature and the spoken language are likewise so called.¹⁰³

In relation to the migration of the Sogdians into Sūyāb Rong Xinjiang provided the following evidence:

“On one of the 61 stone statues of foreign chieftains which were erected in 705 before a Qian Tomb, the Tomb of Gaozong Emperor and Empress Wu, one finds the inscription of “An Chebishi 安车鼻施, the Cishi (Prefect) of Sūyāb Prefecture”.”¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ FRYE, 1954, pp. 7; VAISSIÈRE, 2005, pp. 114 identified this city with Jamūkath and points out the ‘Ḥamūk’ to be corrected to ‘Jamūk’.

⁹⁹ KLJASHTORNYJ, 1964, pp. 158, 219.

¹⁰⁰ A discussion of the urban structure of Aq-Beshim is found in SEMENOV & TASHBAEVA, 1997, pp. 48-51. The Chinese sources mentioning Sūyāb are discussed in ZUEV, 1960.

¹⁰¹ The most comprehensive study to-date on the urban development in Semirechye, in particular areas that were developed by Sogdians remains BAJPAKOV, 1986. In particular informative are discussions on pages 30-34.

¹⁰² The demographic growth in these settlements is determined by the size of these settlements.

¹⁰³ Cited in VAISSIÈRE, 2005, pp. 116.

¹⁰⁴ RONG, 2009, pp. 400.

The last name *An* here indicates that the magistrate of Sūyāb was from Bukhara. Rong maintained that the second part of his name ‘Chebishi’ was either a transliteration of Sogdian *cp’yš* ‘chief’ or Turkic *čaviš* ‘general’ attested as part of the names of Western Turkic officials.¹⁰⁵ Despite the obscurity of An Chebishi’s genealogy (whether Turk of Sogdian lineage or Sogdian with a Turkic title) the above shows that the Sogdian community of Sūyāb at 705 CE (the date of the monument) was substantial enough to have their own chieftain and bureaucracy system.

The Sogdian inscriptions of Semirechye perhaps demonstrate the paramount contribution of the Sogdians to the Turkic-speaking culture of Central Asia, namely the transmission of writing.¹⁰⁶ The earliest texts of the Türk Empire, as witnessed by the Bugut inscription, were written in the Sogdian language, which dates to the last quarter of the sixth century.¹⁰⁷ The use of Sogdian by the Turks is also attested in *Zhou Shu*, which in its German translation reads as “die schrift der T'u-küe ähnelt die der Hu-Barbaren”¹⁰⁸, the ethnonym *Hu* here clearly represents the Sogdians. The *Zhou Shu* episode is also echoed in Menander’s narrative of the Sogdian embassy to the Byzantine court that was headed by a Sogdian ambassador named Maniakh. Menander, in his narration informs that Maniakh to the court submitted a letter written in “Skythian”.¹⁰⁹ Rodger Blockley (Menander’s editor), opined that Maniakh, the Sogdian ambassador, may also have been responsible for composing the letter, in which case the language in which the letter was composed was not “Skythian” but probably Sogdian.¹¹⁰

The subsequent development of the Sogdian settlements in Semirechye and beyond meant the integration of Sogdians into the Turkic-speaking milieu and the creation of a compound (Turco-Sogdian) culture. This integration of Sogdians among various ethno-linguistic groups is indicated primarily by the adaptation of the Sogdian script to Turkic phonology, which paved the way for the use of Sogdian as the principal writing system throughout the history of the Türk and then Uighur Empires. This trend was disturbed only briefly at the beginning of

¹⁰⁵ RONG, 2009, pp. 401.

¹⁰⁶ CLAUSON, 2002, pp. 1-37, discusses the historical development of Turkic writings in Central Asia, where he mentions distinctive characteristics observed in Uighur (Turkic) texts and their correlation with that of Sogdian as medium facilitating the emergence of Uighur writing system.

¹⁰⁷ KLJASHTORNYJ & LIVSHITS, 1971, pp. 121-146; *ibid*, 1972, pp. 69-102.

¹⁰⁸ LIU, MAU-TSAI, 1958, pp. 10.

¹⁰⁹ BLOCKLEY, 1985, pp. 114-115.

¹¹⁰ BLOCKLEY, 1985, pp.263.

the eighth century by a national xenophobic reaction within the elites of the Türk nobility and as a consequence during this period, Turkic texts were written in the runic alphabet.¹¹¹

The last dated Sogdian inscription, the Kulan-sai (Chim-tash) in Semirechye, is dated 1026 CE (the sixth month of 394 Khosrow's year).¹¹² This inscription of 18 lines consists primarily of Turkic male and female personal names. The Turkic nobility is identified by their personal names, the male names being followed by the Sogdian word for lord 'xwβw' and female names being followed by the word *x(q)atun* 'empress or queen.' In light of its dating, it is possible to assume that between the sixth and eleventh centuries Semirechye was uninterruptedly a zone of predominantly Sogdian cultural characteristics. However, the role of local heritage still manifested itself, as seen in the Sogdian inscriptions from Semirechye where personal names are not in Sogdian but in Turkic, or the use of the animal cycle calendar that was common amongst the Turks. Nevertheless, what is intriguing here is that these indigenous Turkic cultural elements were presented through a Sogdian 'cultural agency', namely language and script.

The main contributing factors explaining the influential role of the Sogdians in the fifth-eighth centuries were:

1. Close contacts with the pastoralist and trade communities that travelled through their settlements along the 'silk road' trade routes.
2. The demographic and economic shift of western Central Asia
 - a. The defeat of Hephthalites,
 - b. The growth of Turkic dominance,
 - c. The return to a more political stable condition in China.¹¹³

These factors enabled the integration of the Sogdians into the wider socio-political and economic context of the region that lasted for about six hundred years.

China

Both literary sources and archaeological data indicate that substantial numbers of Sogdians were living in the Uighur (Turkish) dominated areas of the Mongolian-Chinese borderlands as well as major cities, like Dunhuang, Jiuquan, Guzang, Lanzhou and Luoyang in Western

¹¹¹ GIRAUD, 1960, pp. 17–9. Related discussion are also found in KLJASHTORNYJ, 1964, pp. 44–50; KYZLASOV, 1991, pp. 62–85. Beyond the Türk Empire, the Sogdian writing was instrumental for development of Mongol and Manchu alphabets, which survive to the present day.

¹¹² LIVSHITS, 2008, pp.368–388.

¹¹³ After the events of early fourth century attested in the Ancient Letters.

and Central China.¹¹⁴ Walter Henning suggested that the date of the Sogdian migration and their settling into China, “...is likely [to be] long before the invention of paper” and Sogdian “colonies continued to exist until the tenth century at least.”¹¹⁵ From the words of Nanai Vandak, the writer of the Letter II (lines 19–20) of the Ancient Letters collection, it is known that there were about a hundred ‘free men’ (*āzat-piθrak*- sons of noblemen) from Samarqand in a certain town of China (Dunhuang?), and forty men in another town.¹¹⁶ The letter dates to 313 CE, but the Sogdians whom it mentions may have settled there some time prior to the writing the letter.

Most recently, Rong comprehensively studied the distribution of Sogdian settlements and migration in China according to their pattern of travel (sequenced town by town).¹¹⁷ The most intriguing moment revealed in his study is the re-naming of towns and the establishing of new towns by the Sogdians. For example, the city of Qiemo, “located on the western perimeter of the Tarim Basin” as attested by *Shazhou Yizhou dizhi* and *Shouchang cheng dijing* was renamed *Boxian-zhen* in 676 CE during the reign of Emperor Gaozong. In this regard the “illustrated stone of the foreign king at the Qianling Mausoleum” informs us that the leader (*zhu*) of the town was Fudiyan and that his last name was ‘He.’¹¹⁸ This corresponds to his town of origin, Kushaniyah (located between Samarqand and Bukhara), in Sogdiana. In a similar manner, Qiemo’s neighbouring town, Shanshan, which declined in the latter decades of the Sui dynasty, was taken over by Kang Yandian.¹¹⁹ As a result of the resettlement of Sogdians there it was renamed Dinahe-cheng. However, when it was brought under the administration of Shazhou in 675 CE it was again renamed Shicheng-zhen, which soon after became known as the ‘Large City of Shanshan of the Sogdians’.¹²⁰ The significance of this city both culturally and economically perhaps influenced Tuncheng, a

¹¹⁴ VAISSIÈRE, 2005, pp. 199-224. For example, Letters ‘I’ and ‘III’ were written by a merchant from Dunhuang (*δrw’n*) while the letter ‘5’ was written in Guzang (*kc’n*). Other place-names mentioned in these letters include Jiuquan (*cwcn*), Chang’n (*’xwmt’n*) and Loulan (*kr’wr’n*). The mention of these places names indicate the presence of either a Sogdian community or trade affiliates in these towns. Further, these letters name types of goods traded or handled as middlemen by Sogdian merchants (or the particular merchant writing the letter) and in some cases provide the quantity of these goods. The name of some other commodities mentioned in the letters however is hard to identify. Further details found in GRENET *et al*, 2001, pp. 91-104.

¹¹⁵ HENNING, 1948, pp. 602. The exact dating of these letters, however, has been of contentious debate. But, the argument of SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2001, pp.267-280 and SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2005, pp.181-193, is most convincing, which also summarizes the various points of view on this issue.

¹¹⁶ HENNING, 1948, pp. 606. Whether these figures describe numerous communities or individuals is difficult to determine.

¹¹⁷ RONG, 2012, pp. 338-396. This ‘geographical’ approach of the author makes his research extremely valuable; following the ‘footprint’ of Sogdians (on material and textual evidence) as they travelled from town to town, from their home-country to China.

¹¹⁸ RONG, 2012, pp.342-343.

¹¹⁹ RONG, 2012, pp.342-343.

¹²⁰ RONG, 2012, pp. 342-343.

town which was located 180 *li* to its east and was re-named the ‘Little Shanshan of the Sogdians’.¹²¹ Kang Yandian was also responsible for the foundation of Putao-Cheng four *li* further from Shicheng-zhen, which received its name from the vineyard planted by Kang Yandian.¹²²

These cases exemplify the trends of social and economic influence established by the Sogdians living outside their home country. They either re-constructed declining settlements or founded new ones. Importantly, these cities reflect their refined urban culture and advanced agricultural knowledge, which were also demonstrated in western Central Asia i.e. in Semirechye.

Traces of the commercial and cultural activities of the Sogdians in China are found in many governmental and private documents discovered in the Turfan region and at Dunhuang.¹²³ The Sogdians in these documents are primarily identified by their names transliterated into Chinese. The last names of Sogdians in Chinese official documents are mainly the names of their native places in Sogdiana.¹²⁴ For example, the Chinese last name *Kang* corresponds to Samarqand, *An* to Bukhara and *Shi* to Keš.¹²⁵

However, problems surround the use of toponyms as identification markers of the Sogdians living in China. Rong has observed that intermarriage between Sogdians and non-Sogdians was one of the major factor contributing to the dissemination of Sogdian last names among other (non Sogdian) ethnic groups.¹²⁶ Consequently, as a result of intermarriage, mixed-race Sogdians could have ancestral connections with several Sogdian cities (through the paternal or maternal lineage).

¹²¹ RONG, 2012, pp. 342-343.

¹²² RONG, 2012, pp. 342-343.

¹²³ For the treatment of the subject of Sogdian trade diaspora represented on Chinese official and private documents from Turfan and Dunhuang in the early medieval period (7-8 CE) including relevant references to primary and secondary literature see SKAFF, 2003, pp. 475-524; SKAFF, 2005, pp.311-341; HANSEN, 2005, pp.283-310.

¹²⁴ IKEDA ON, 1965, pp.61, *ibid*, 1993, pp. 155.

¹²⁵ Xiang Da 1957, pp. 12-24. The Chinese sources refer to the Sogdians as representatives of *Zhaowu jiuxing*, literally, “the nine surnames of Zhaowu” or “Zhaowu consisting of nine surnames”. This designation is understood to represent the name of nine polities: Samarkand (Kanguo 康國), Bukhārā (Anguo 安國), Sutrūshana or Ushrūšana (Dong Caoguo 東曹國), Kapūtānā (Caoguo 曹國), Ishītkhan (Xi Caoguo 西曹國), Māymurgh (Miguo 米國), Kushāniya (Heguo 何國), Kashāna (Shiguo 史國), Chāch (Shiguo 石國). More recent discussion of the ‘Zhaowu’ is found in YOSHIDA,2003, pp.35-67

¹²⁶ RONG, 2001, pp. 148-150. The subject of intermarriage reflected in Turfan official registers was also discussed by SKAFF, 2005, pp. 327-333, which pointed out the general openness to inter-ethnic marriage practiced by Sogdians at Turfan. On the other hand, RONG, 2001, pp. 132-135, on basis of data gathered from the grave epitaphs of Sogdians living in China mainland demonstrated that the Sogdian elite living in interior China married within their own ethnic circles. Of 21 epitaphs examined 14 revealed Sogdians male marrying Sogdian female.

Furthermore, many Sogdians permanently residing in China also had Chinese given names. It is also known that some people of Turkic origin after their arrival in China adopted the last name *Shi*, - a shortened form of the royal surname *Ashina*.¹²⁷ This last name, *Shi*, was originally understood to be the last name of Sogdians from Keš.¹²⁸ Edwin Pulleyblank in this regard has asserted that only the family name (last name) *Mi* was exclusively used by Sogdians in China.¹²⁹ Other family names (last names), such as *An* or *Shi*, could have been used by people of other ethnic origins, such as Parthians in the Han period. Jonathan Skaff, on the other hand, has stressed that “a direct reference to birth or ancestry in a particular Sogdian city is the surest form of identification [of Sogdians in Chinese sources].”¹³⁰ The supposition that people with surnames such as *Kang* and *An*, recorded in material remains deriving from Turfan and Dunhuang were mainly Sogdians is tenable on the basis of Turfan and Dunhuang being likely places for Sogdian commercial activity and settlement. This is attested also by literary sources in the Sogdian language.¹³¹

In addition official Chinese documents distinguish non-Chinese merchants, such as Sogdians, by using the word *shanghu* (literally, ‘merchant non-Chinese’) as part of their name.¹³² This identification is found in the documents that Sogdians (as well other immigrants) obtained when travelling in China. Merchants’ stay and travel in China was controlled by two types of travel permits issued by official administrators, namely *guosuo* and *gongyan*. The first denoted a ‘passport’ without spatial or temporal limits allowing merchants to take unrestricted journeys throughout the Tang Empire; the second type was limited to travel within designated destinations and for limited periods only.¹³³

One of the records detailing the movements of Sogdians in the region of Turfan “is the group of thirty-seven separate tax receipts recording payments made over the course of a year, probably around 600 [CE].”¹³⁴ In this register, 41 out of 49 merchants can be distinguished by their Sogdian last names.¹³⁵ In addition, a household register of 707 CE from the

¹²⁷ CHAVANNES, 1903, pp. 47.

¹²⁸ LUO, 1996, pp. 185-216; *ibid*, 2001, pp. 239-245, provides a comprehensive examination of examples of changes in naming practices over several generations among the Shi family members buried at Guyuan, Ningxia.

¹²⁹ PULLEYBLANK, 1952, pp. 320-321.

¹³⁰ SKAFF, 2003, pp. 479.

¹³¹ A similar observation can be made with regards to Sogdians living in Semirechye. As pointed out by SEMENOV, 2002a, pp. 173 (referring to other sources) Sogdians founded several cities that were named after the Sogdian city name from where the founder hailed, like Jamukata founded by those from Paykent and Mi, near Sūyāb, founded by people from Maimurg.

¹³² VAISSIÈRE, 2005, pp. 130-133; WU ZHEN, 2002, pp. 1-21.

¹³³ ARAKAWA MASA HARU, 2005, pp. 232.

¹³⁴ HANSEN, 2005, pp. 290.

¹³⁵ HANSEN, 2005, pp. 290-291

Chonghua Township at Turfan revealed that in a certain village called Anle (Peace and Happiness) 19 out of 23 households registered in the government census were Sogdian (these households are also identified by their last names).¹³⁶ This figure is taken from one village, but may be considered as representative of some of the villages and towns that Sogdians established at the Turfan oasis and possibly elsewhere in China.

Sogdian settlements in China, notably at Turfan and Dunhuang, were governed by the leaders nominated by the Chinese government. The office of Sogdian leader was called *sabao*, which is identical to Sogdian *s'rtp'w* and means a 'caravan leader.'¹³⁷ Rong in his two major studies about this title and the function of Zoroastrian temples in China during the Sui and Tang dynasties has shown that the term was originally imported into the Chinese lexicon in the early second century from the Sanskrit *sârthavâha*, a term which was used in Buddhist literature designating the Buddha as chief caravan-leader.¹³⁸ The earliest record of the term *sabao* in Sogdian textual records is found in 'Letter V' of the Ancient Letters collection.¹³⁹ However, its lexical change from a metaphorical-spiritual into a bureaucratic term, designating the political and religious leader of the Sogdian community, took place sometime after the mid-sixth century.¹⁴⁰ The *vitae* of many Sogdian *sabao*s are known from both Chinese official historical records and their own richly decorated grave epitaphs, some containing inscriptions.¹⁴¹ In addition to the *sabao*, a letter written by Miwnay, an abandoned Sogdian woman in Dunhuang, to her mother in Samarqand, informs us that there were other leaders in the Sogdian communities settled in China.¹⁴² In her letter she refers to *β'nkr'm*

¹³⁶ SKAFF, 2005, pp. 314-315 the average size of the household of Sogdians was 5.5 family members in contrast the Han Chinese registers show only average of 3.8 member in a household. These figures show that at some places Sogdians were majority.

¹³⁷ DIEN, 1963, pp. 335-346; SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1996, pp. 45-67.

¹³⁸ GRENET *et al*, 2001, pp.98, discusses the etymology of the word and its relevant literature, The Chinese context of usage of this term is discussed in RONG, 2005, pp. 207-208 that also provides further bibliographic references.

¹³⁹ GRENET *et al*, 2001, pp.98.

¹⁴⁰ For a discussion of the historical setting of the term '*sabao*' based on archeological evidence, as well relevant bibliographies see: RONG, 2003, pp. 32-35. The overall question of the migration and various social phenomenon related to migration, such as the emergence and establishment of the institution of *sabo* see VAISSIÈRE & TROMBERT, 2004, pp. 931-969.

¹⁴¹ The most comprehensive study of Sogdian funerary evidence of Sogdians is LERNER, 2005, pp.1-51, which discusses currently known Sogdian grave coaches. Her focus is elements of artistic assimilation exhibited in the funerary art of Sogdians that are modeled after the Chinese sarcophagi. These funerary coaches were discovered in China.

¹⁴² SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2005, pp. 181-193; the 'Letter I' of the Ancient Letters collection.

‘councillor’ (or *β'zkr'm* ‘tax collector’) and *βynptw* ‘temple-priest,’ who in her distress she approaches for help.¹⁴³

The level of influence and authority of these ‘administrative posts’ in the Sogdian communities in China is not known in great detail. However, on the basis of the titles of various officials that were functioning within the Sogdian communities, such as *sabao* (chief leader), tax collector, priest, one might also assume existence of autonomous Sogdian social institutions, e.g. a tax office, a temple and so on. One such institution was *xian* 祆 a temple devoted to Sogdian (Zoroastrian) divinities. In Chinese sources the existence of such temples are known from Turfan, Hami and in the Dunhuang, all of which probably had large concentrations of Sogdians living there for a few generations.¹⁴⁴

However, the mid-seventh century “saw an evolution in the official position of the Sogdian communities” which were converted from “quite independent and autonomous [and] loosely integrated in the mandarin hierarchy into more controlled “submitted counties” without the Sogdian hierarchy.”¹⁴⁵ During the second half of the seventh and eighth centuries the title *sabao* and explicit references to the Sogdians gradually disappeared from Chinese historical records. This was most likely due to the rapid Sinicization that Sogdians have experienced after the fateful rebellion led by An Lushan (755-763 CE).¹⁴⁶

In their home country Sogdians also faced similar changes in regard to their language and identity. The Arab invasion of the early eighth century introduced both a new religion and script, which was soon adopted for writing New Persian that was deemed to supersede Sogdian as the *lingua franca*. Although the Islamisation of Sogdiana and the shift to New Persian were gradual processes, their influence was significant.¹⁴⁷ Given the rapid

¹⁴³ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1996, pp. 45-46. It is interesting to note that the ‘temple priest’ promised Miwnay a camel and a male escort. This fact suggests that the Sogdian temples enjoyed some sort of patronage from the rich traders allowing the priests to own servants/slaves.

¹⁴⁴ Detailed discussion including relevant bibliographic references and translation of Chinese paragraphs is found in VAISSIÈRE, 2005, pp. 128-129. See also GRENET & ZHANG GUANGDA, 1996, pp. 175–186.

¹⁴⁵ VAISSIÈRE, 2003, pp. 25.

¹⁴⁶ PULLEYBLANK, 1955, pp. 14-17, An Lushan (An- a Chinese term designating ‘Bukhara’ or person from there; Lu-Shan- Chinese transliteration of Sogdian name *rwxsñ* ‘shining, bright’). This man began his administrative service at the Tang court as translator and subsequently was promoted to the post of the governor of the Ho-Pei, if his revolt against Tang was successful he would have become the sole ruler of the Middle Kingdom. The biographical guide, annotated translation of primary sources and chronological exposition of the subject, based on one of the three biographies available in Chinese is found in DES ROTOURS, 1962. The information specific to the vocation and career of An Lushan is found DES ROTOURS, 1962, pp. 285-294.

¹⁴⁷ Al Muqaddasī writing in the latter half of the tenth century testifies to the continued use of Sogdian: “the language of al-Sughd is unique to it and is approximated by the languages of the rural districts of Bukhārā, which are quite varied, but understood among them; and I witnessed the venerable Imām, Muhammad ibn al-Fadhl speaking in it often” (MUQADDASĪ, 1994, pp. 296). Similarly, Al Bīrūnī, a polymath of early eleventh century demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge of Sogdian in his works, where he supplied a comparison of

demographic and linguistic changes in the region it seems that the eleventh century saw an irreversible decline of the cultural and linguistic identity of the Sogdians as distinct ethno-linguistic group. Afterwards they appear to have been absorbed into the mass of Islamic Iranian and Turkic-speaking peoples.¹⁴⁸

The ‘merchant’ and ‘cultural’ empire of the Sogdians

The eastward migration of Sogdians in the early medieval period, between the fifth and the eighth centuries, is an important component in the history of cultural interactions taking place in the Central Asian landmass. Judging by the traces of their influence recovered at Čač, Otrar and many other settlements in Semirechye, the cultural and economic space covered by the Sogdians had already doubled before they began to gain a foothold in the Chinese territories, notably at the Tang capital cities, Chang’an, Luoyang and Dunhuang. For much of their history the Sogdians were renowned as merchants *par excellence* on the trade networks across the Central Asian plateau, which led some scholars to speak of their ‘merchant’ and ‘commercial’ empire.¹⁴⁹ However, beyond trade, the Sogdians were purveyors of culture in general. As Judith Lerner puts it, “because cultural exchange invariably accompanies the commercial kind...not only were the luxury products of the West (including those of Sogdiana) that were brought by the Sogdians’ caravans of value in their own right, such products were a source of new artistic ideas and religious imagery for the Chinese” or equally for members of other ethnic groups.¹⁵⁰

the Sogdian calendar with that of Chorasmia. (BĪRŪNĪ, 1957, pp. 253-257.) Both these information demonstrate survival of Sogdian in at least three hundred years after the Arab conquest.

¹⁴⁸What has survived of the Sogdians, or rather their language in addition to the texts and epigraphic monuments is the Yagnobi language. It is spoken among the population of Yagnob in the Upper Zarafšān valley as well as in a number of areas in the valleys of the Hissor mountain range of central Tajikistan. The toponym Sogd (Sughd) at present is used to designate the Northern Province of the Republic of Tajikistan. It is also preserved in the form of Sugut as in the designation of the village on the upper Zarafšān River. On Yaghnoobi, studies see BOGOLYUBOV, 1956; KHROMOV, 1972; COMRIE, 1981.

¹⁴⁹In particular, this concept is formulated in LERNER, 2001, pp. 220-230. However, the focus of scholarship on Sogdians primary as traders is present in almost every research paper concerning them as exemplified by VAISSIÈRE, 2005. The ‘part 2’ of this work is called ‘commercial empire’ and discusses the becoming of Sogdians as principal traders and the economic growth of their home-land. The leading role of Sogdians in trans-Asiatic commerce routes was first ‘theorized’ by PELLĪOT, 1912, pp. 105, “Il semble donc que les Sogdiens, marchands habiles, se déplaçant facilement, aient essaimé de la Sogdiane sur toutes les routes d’Asie centrale et orientale, et que leur idiome ait un peu joué dans le premier millénaire de notre ère ce même rôle de langue internationale, de lingua franca, que nous verrons tenu dans les mêmes régions, au XIII^e siècle, par un autre idiome iranien, le persan.” His hypothesis undoubtedly provided impulse in realization of many scholarships in recent decades devoted to the dominance of the trade routes of the Central Asia by Sogdians in early medieval era (fifth-eighth centuries CE) e.g. VAISSIÈRE, 2005. About Pelliot’s designation of the Sogdian language as the *lingua franca*, SKAFF, 2003, pp. 474 points out that despite some scholarly agreement, this question remains open to discussion.

¹⁵⁰LERNER, 2001, pp. 227.

Although Sogdiana never achieved the status of empire in the political sense of the word, the Sogdian people, representing various social groups e.g. artists, merchants, monks, translators and craftsmen played a paramount role in both the cultural synthesis and evolution of major cultural aspects of the Central Asian people, such as literacy, diplomacy and spread of religions. Accordingly, judging by the cultural influence that Sogdians outside their homeland gained among the nations of Central Asia one may equally speak of their ‘cultural empire’ - combining Iranian, Turkic and Chinese elements under its aegis.

In the existing scholarship however, this ‘cultural empire’ is often overshadowed by the dominance of the Sogdian ‘merchant empire.’ This may be due to the fact that much of the cultural transmission and influence of the Sogdians was embedded into the products that were transferred as commercial objects. This is exemplified by the silverware and ceramics produced in China that imitated Sogdian models, whose prototypes originally may have been brought to China for either commercial or tribute purposes.¹⁵¹ Subsequently these objects became a channel of inspiration for Chinese craftsmen and influenced the emergence of a range of new types of metalware (silver and golden) and ceramics with Sogdian designs, but made in China. Similarly, the cultural influence of the Sogdians is noticeable in the weaving and ornamentation techniques of pattern-woven silk fabrics, which before their attestation in Chinese silk were known in Sogdiana.¹⁵² Prior to their exposure to silk weaving or production, Sogdians had expertise in making wool and cotton fabrics with elaborate patterns borrowed from Sassanid monumental art. These patterns (loom and weave technique and

¹⁵¹ Discussion on metal-ware (silver) vessels of Sogdian origin found in China and their wider artistic context with Sasanian silver products, including relevant bibliography information is found in MARSHAK, 1999, pp. 101-110. The influence of the silver vessel from Central Asia (Sogdiana and other regions) in the evolution of the new designs and types in Chinese ceramics is discussed in RAWSON, 1991, pp. 139-151. In addition, QI DONGFANG, 1998, pp. 153-172 is also useful study showing the artistic connections between the Chinese and non-Chinese products. In particular, author on the example of the cups with ring handle has demonstrated that metal-ware (silver, gold plated) based on manufacturing technique, ornamentation and style can be categorized as imported. Author highlights that these types of cups were locally manufactured by Sogdian masters living in China. However, was then subsequently produced by the Chinese masters. However, the prototype is clearly Sogdian. The last category of objects is in particular significant; demonstrating continuity of the cultural model introduced by Sogdians, which preserved the ‘identity’ of its transmitters.

¹⁵² Aspects of transmission of the weaving techniques and textile design (iconography, motifs and types) by Sogdians on the basis of comparative examination of silk material samples found in China, Caucasus and Central Asia is found in IERUSALIMSKAYA, 1967, pp. 55-78; *ibid*, 1972, pp. 5-46, *ibid*, 1996. More recent studies on the subject of Sogdians and silk production in the context of economic and cultural relations between Sogdiana and its neighboring states include MARSHAK, 2006, pp. 49-60; FRYE, 2006, pp. 75-81, which deals with one of the types of silk fabric produced by Sogdians namely *zandaniji*. RASPOPOVA, 2006, pp. 61-74, deals with the issue of textiles in Sogdian murals, which are identified to be silk. A concise survey on Central Asian silk weaving history and is found in BELENITSKIY & BENTOVICH, 1961, pp. 66-78. The WATT *et al*, 1997, a catalogue devoted to the sixty-four Central Asian and Chinese silk objects, including silk tapestries and embroideries dating from the eighth to the early fifteenth centuries in the collections of *The Metropolitan Museum of Art* and *The Cleveland Museum of Art* is also good informative source. The review of the catalogue in KUHN, 1999, pp. 353-357 provides further examples and critical insights about the understanding of the silk objects discussed in the named catalogue.

ornamentation) were afterwards adapted for the production of silk fabrics, in particular embroidery and tapestry designs.¹⁵³ There are reasons to believe that Sogdian textile making techniques initially came to China as a ‘commercial’ product; that is they may have been transferred either through émigré craftsmen or textile samples. From the early eighth century the patterns and designs that were Sogdian in origin were adopted and assimilated into the Chinese weaving tradition.

Additionally, the cultural activities and interactions of the Sogdians are also vividly represented in their artwork, such as wall murals. One such example of the cultural and political interactions of the Sogdians is the theme of the famous mural of ‘Ambassadors’ that was unearthed at the site of Afrāsiāb, and is now housed in the museum on the site where it was discovered. The painting stands over 2 meters tall and 10.7 metres long and fills the four walls of the dwelling of the presumably wealthy Sogdian citizen who commissioned it.¹⁵⁴ Particularly interesting is the ‘western’ wall depicting an impressive procession of ambassadors and emissaries from different countries, coming to pay homage to the figure whose depiction is now lost, but is possibly Varkhuman (on the basis of the inscription consisting of the speech delivered by the delegate from Chaganiyan in which king Varkhuman is named).¹⁵⁵

Frantz Grenet has maintained that this painting taken together with other textual and pictorial evidence of a similar subject-matter “proves the existence of a centred vision of the world, but the centring was on the Sogdian ruler rather than on Sogdiana itself, and the overall scheme was clearly borrowed from Sasanian royal propaganda”.¹⁵⁶ By observing the positioning of the delegates of different countries in the mural (whether the delegates are placed to the north of the main figure or south or west or east) Grenet has suggested that the Afrāsiāb painting on the whole reflects the ‘geopolitics’ of medieval Sogdiana.¹⁵⁷ In particular, he points out the pre-eminence of the relations with the Turks and China, which is seen in the more realistic depiction of these delegates. The lower section of the painting

¹⁵³ IERUSALIMSKAYA, 1996 provides a detailed examination of the question of transmission of Sogdian ornament and weaving technology for silk fabrics. The concise survey of sources and examples can also be found in ROSSABI, 1997, pp. 21-107, which examines both weaving techniques and ornamentation of various silk fabrics from the 8th-11th centuries.

¹⁵⁴ It was discovered in 1965 during the road construction in the Afrasiab area and the upper part of the mural was destroyed. Thus the original height of the mural and some of the depicted characters is not known.

¹⁵⁵ LIVSHITS, 2006, pp. 59-74.

¹⁵⁶ GRENET, 2005, pp. 133.

¹⁵⁷ GRENET, 2005, pp. 133.

represents the link with India portrayed by an artificial depiction of the scenery (only the costumes are realistic).¹⁵⁸

Apart from the geopolitical theme, one can also argue that some of the elements portrayed in this mural, such as the New Year procession (Nawruz) on the 'southern' wall and the portrait of the priests wearing *padām* (the ritual mask worn by Zoroastrian priests at sacrifice rituals) are representational elements of the culture, tradition and society of Sogdiana. Consequently this mural is truly a self-portrait of Sogdians representing their culture in holistic terms (religions, celebrations, costumes and traditions, language and political relations).

At the same time, regardless of the final interpretation of the painting (its purpose, symbolism and semantics), what is certain is that the Sogdian artist is faithfully depicting the ethnographic (cultural) links of Sogdians within their culturally complex milieu. The main ethnic groups represented are Iranians, Turks, Chinese, Koreans and, probably, Tibetans. Certainly the cultural links and customs of this mural do not ignore its political message, but rather enhance it in keeping with the traditions of Achaemenid Persia and Mesopotamia.¹⁵⁹ The speech of the delegate from Chaganiyan is also of particular interest, for when addressing the Sogdian sovereign Varkhuman he mentions that he is keenly aware of the gods and writings of Samarkand [i.e. Sogdiana].¹⁶⁰

The knowledge of one diplomat from Chaganiyan of course is not enough to assume that Sogdian culture was well known in that area. On the other hand in the light of the dominance of Sogdians in trade and in their relationships with Chinese, it might be suggested that people from Chaganiyan and Tukharistan had become familiar with the Sogdian language and traditions, and this assisted them in establishing connections with China.

Literature translation: a means of religious transmission

In addition to their role in the wide diffusion of their own and other cultural products through trade, the cultural influence of the Sogdians is also unambiguous in regards to the transmission of religion through literature translation. This is primarily shown by the religious texts produced in Sogdian, as well as indications made in Chinese sources about religious texts that were translated by the Sogdians. For example, the colophon of a Sogdian Buddhist text from Dunhuang informs us that a certain Sogdian man named Chatfārātsān An

¹⁵⁸ GRENET, 2005, pp. 133.

¹⁵⁹ In certain measures, the Ambassadors mural can be compared to the Apadana relief from Persepolis and the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III from the site of ancient Nimrod. Both these reliefs show the tribute scene represented by different nations parading to the king's throne.

¹⁶⁰ The examination of the Sogdian inscription accompanying the 'Ambassadors' painting of Afrasiab is found in GRENET, 2007, pp. 9-19; LIVSHITS, 2006, pp. 59-74.

who was resident of Luoyang has paid a monk named Jñāncinta to translate for him a Buddhist sutra from Indian into Sogdian.¹⁶¹ As Yutaka Yoshida observes, this colophon provides several pieces of valuable information, including the ‘client’s’ last name (which indicates that he was from Bukhara) and the name of the scribe who wrote the texts, (‘Butiyān’, meaning ‘Buddha’s favour,’) which was also Sogdian.¹⁶² The particle ‘buti’ (Buddha) in Sogdian personal names in Chinese sources is attested mainly towards the end of the seventh century, which according to Yoshida suggests a possible period when Sogdians expressed their Buddhist identity openly.¹⁶³

This example also suggests that both laity and clergy played an important role in religious transmission.

The involvement of Sogdians in literature translation and religious transmission was perhaps primarily due to the fact that in the fifth-eighth centuries (judging by the quantity and

¹⁶¹ YOSHIDA, 2009, pp. 288

¹⁶² YOSHIDA, 2009, pp. 288.

¹⁶³ YOSHIDA, 1998, pp. 40-41. Additional information on Sogdian translators of Buddhism can be gleaned from the Chinese Buddhist texts (historical and hagiographical) and the colophons of some of the manuscripts. Some of the recorded names of Sogdian Buddhist monks/translators were Sogdians resident in China. ZÜRCHER, 1972, is still one of the authoritative resources in this subject. YOSHIDA, 2009, pp. 288-329, is equally informative in relation to the Sogdian Buddhist literature and Chinese sources including relevant bibliographic information. The Sogdians in the Chinese sources (religious or official documents), are distinguished by their family names, such as Kang 康 and An 安. The complexity of the identification of the *An* family name as a Sogdian last name is discussed in VAISSIÈRE, 2005, pp. 120-122. The complexity of the issue is related to the identification of the *An* in the Han Dynasty period as Parthia (Anxi) whereas in the Tang period this name is used to designate Bukhara. One of the renowned translators of the Buddhist scriptures recorded in Chinese texts of the Han Era is An Shigao, who hailed from Anxi (Parthia). Accordingly, FORTE, 1995, pp. 645-652 is reluctant to consider people bearing the *An* last name in Tang Era texts to be of Sogdian-Bukharan origin, but rather wishes to see them as Parthians. His observation is true when speaking of specific Han chronology, but it is not applicable throughout Chinese history as it ignores the existence of two distinct émigrés bearing the same family name; as well as the transitional moment after the collapse of Parthia and increase of Sogdians when the name of the country An passed from designating the Arsacid state of Iran to Bukhara. This observation is affirmed by the colophon given as example where Sogdians themselves identified with this last name. The abovementioned colophon dates to 728 CE and is the only dated Buddhist text colophon. ZÜRCHER, 1972, pp.35-37 pointed to another early Sogdian translator of Buddhist literature with Kang last name, such as Kang Ju, who was contemporary of the famous Lokaksema. Additionally, the earliest translation of the *Zhong benqi jing* and *Xiunxing brnqi jing* - a narrative on the life of Buddha, is said to be done by a Sogdian named Kang Menxiang and his Indian colleagues Tanguo and Zhu Dali. In connection with the Sogdian translators/transmitters of Buddhism it is worth noting that some of them were representative of Sogdian communities who for a long period lived in India. This fact is primarily suggested by their knowledge of Sanskrit, a primary language of Buddhist literature. VAISSIÈRE, 2005, pp. 77-78, pointed out that they had Sogdian ancestry rather than ‘citizenship’ and prior coming to China were living in Bactria or south of Hindu Kush “where great commerce and diffusion of Buddhism [during the Hun Dynasty period] overlapped.” Indeed the existence of the Sogdian diaspora in India is attested to in literary sources notably the biography of Kang Seng Hui, which was recorded in *The Lives of Eminent Monks*. A translation of the Kang Seng Hui biography can be found in CHAVANNES, 1909, pp. 199–200. A short description of *The Lives of Eminent Monks* is found in ZÜRCHER, 1972, pp.10, who comments that it is a reliable source with a touch of hagiographical additions. The discussion of the Sogdian community in India is found in VAISSIÈRE, 2005, pp. 71-85 where the Kang Seng Hui biography is also cited. Additionally, the surviving colophons in Sogdian Buddhist texts indicates of several place names, such as Turfan, Dunhuang, Xian (Chang’an) and Luoyang, which was home of substantial Sogdian communities. This mention of toponyms is indicative of the fact that in these communities under the significant Buddhist influence of the local milieu, Sogdians gradually converted to Buddhism.

diversity of the textual heritage that has survived) they were one of the few nations in Central Asia that had a well-established literary tradition. Other Central Asian languages such as Turkish (Uyghur) or Mongolian that used the Chinese loanword *bi* either as a word for “writing brush” (Turk. *bir*) or as a verb “to write” (Turk. *biti*-, whence Mong. *biči*-, Khot. *pīr*-, “to write, draw, paint”), that can be considered as indicator of the lack of concept of writing or advanced writing culture in whole. Unlike these Sogdians retained the Old Iranian verb **ni-paisa-* (Sog. *npys*) meaning ‘to write.’¹⁶⁴ The latter ultimately connects the emergence of the writing culture in Sogdian to the Achaemenid period.

Furthermore, in the rise of the linguistic ability of the Sogdians the geographical position and political history of Sogdiana was also instrumental. Living side-by-side with Iranian and Turkic-speaking people, they were often under the nominal political power of various different ethno-linguistic groups; and of course they were in close commercial contact with both steppe and sedentary cultures. These socio-cultural factors are by no means conclusive, but they are suggestive of the reality that many Sogdians spoke at least two or three languages, such as Uighur and Chinese. The multilingual skills of the Sogdians enabled them among other things to be in the frontline of the transmission of literacy and literature translation.

The documentary record of Sogdian translators of Christian texts is scarce; there is no further evidence like the earlier mentioned colophon of the Buddhist text informing us of how Christian texts were translated or who translated them. However, the contribution of Sogdians in the transmission and translation of Christianity can be recovered based on other historical grounds and evidence.

Before its penetration into China, Christianity was already firmly established in Persia, so much so that Christianity in China was first called ‘Persian teaching’ (*Bosijiao* 波斯教) and the Christian monasteries were called *Bosi si* 波斯寺 (Persian Monastery).¹⁶⁵ The Persian identity of Christianity in China is also evident in the onomastic of the well-known Xian monument, which provides more than seventy personal names followed by different ecclesiastical offices, such as priest and bishop.¹⁶⁶ The personal names represent both Syriac

¹⁶⁴ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1996, pp. 66-67.

¹⁶⁵ The change of the name of the monasteries and Christianity itself in large took place in 745 CE by the imperial edict of the Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (713–755 CE); the monasteries were renamed as *Da Qin si* 大秦寺. The edict is recorded in *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 (Essential Regulations of the Tang). The translation and concise discussion of this edict is found in FORTE, 1996, pp. 353-355.

¹⁶⁶ As exemplified by the introductory statement “Mar Yazedbouzid, presbyter and chorepiscopus of Kumdan, the Royal city, whose late father, Milis was a priest from Balkh, a city of Tocharistan”. For more details, see HUNTER, 2009, pp. 75.

and Pahlavi names, such as Sabršo, Mar Sargis, Mešihādad and Išo‘dad.¹⁶⁷ The earliest officially recorded Christian missionary in China was Aluoben 阿羅本 (635 CE) whose missionary activity supported by imperial permit is epitomized in the famous Xian stele (*Da Qin jingjiao liuxing Zhongguo bei* 大秦景教流行中國碑) erected in 781 CE.¹⁶⁸ According to this monument “during the reign of Gaozong 高宗 (650– 683) Christian monasteries (*jingsi* 景寺) were established in every prefecture. At that time Christianity (*jingjiao* 景教) was not limited to one monastery or to one stele.”¹⁶⁹ In other words Christianity, supported by imperial protection, was free to spread into major cities in China of the Tang Dynasty period. In particular, the mention of “Gabri’el, priest and archdeacon, and head of the Church of Kumdan and Sarag”,¹⁷⁰ which were the Sogdian names of the western and eastern capital cities of the Tang empire, is suggestive that by 781 CE there were churches organised in both capitals (if not in every prefecture).¹⁷¹

At the time of Aluoben’s arrival and in 781 CE (the time of the erection of the Xian stele), Sogdians were one of the major Iranian (Persian) ethnic groups living in China and *en route* to China along the trade routes. As mentioned earlier, Samarqand the capital of Sogdiana was an important ecclesiastical see of the Church of the East. This historical situation strongly suggests that the Persian or Syriac-speaking missionaries commemorated in the Xian stele had interacted with Sogdians either in China or on their way to China, and that some of them were possibly Sogdians, though bearing Syriac Christian names. By the seventh-eighth centuries Sogdians had been gradually integrated into Chinese society and many of them had become fluent in Chinese language and customs. Living in communities with large concentrations of Sogdians allowed them also to preserve their Persian (Iranian) identity, particularly their language. Accordingly, one may assume that Sogdians living in China may have been the first point of contact for the Persian-speaking monks for whom possibly Sogdian was more familiar than Chinese.

In addition, the presence of the Christian Sogdian community in China is also attested by the following epigraphic evidence:

¹⁶⁷ The recent examination of the Syriac inscription of stele is found in HUNTER, 2009, pp.80-81.

¹⁶⁸ The author of the text of the Xian stele is identified as Adam whose Chinese name was Jingjing 景淨. In the Xian stele, he is identified as a “Persian monk of the Da Qin Monastery” (Da Qin si Bosi seng 大秦寺波斯僧). A comprehensive discussion of the discovery of the monument is found in PELLLOT, 1996, pp. 5-57. A concise discussion of the archeological background of the stele including bibliographic references is also found in TANG, 2002, pp. 25-29.

¹⁶⁹ NICOLINI-ZANI, 2009, pp. 99.

¹⁷⁰ PELLLOT 1984, pp. 57 found in discussion of the Syriac text of the stele.

¹⁷¹ PELLLOT 1928, pp.91-92.

1. The name He Yousuoyan registered in one of the land registers from about 640 CE of Xi Prefecture, Gaochang District.¹⁷² The last name of this person denotes his place of origin as the town of Kushaniyah (Heguo 何國 located between Samarqand and Bukhara) and his given name Yousuoyan according to Yoshida is the middle Chinese transcription (*jǐu ʃiwo ǎn) of the Sogdian Yišō'-yān meaning 'favoured by, or gift of Jesus'.¹⁷³ Wang Ding has pointed out the possible connection of this name with Manichaeism,¹⁷⁴ however, considering the fact that Chinese sources inform us of the official introduction of the Manichean religion during the rule of the unpopular empress Wu (684-704 CE) and the official ban on the religion after the translation of its texts in 731 CE, it is more probable that He Yousuoyan was a Sogdian Christian, since at this time Christianity still enjoyed imperial support.¹⁷⁵
2. The name An Yena 安野那 known from a grave epitaph from Guilin 桂林, southern China. The last name An indicates that the native home of this person was Bukhara. This Christian from Bukhara died during the Jinglong 景龍 era (707–710 CE).¹⁷⁶
3. The name of the Monk Siyuan of Maimurg known from the grave epitaph of his father, Mi Jifen 米繼芬 (714–805 CE). Not much is known about this Sogdian monk. However, as Ge Chengyong in his study of the epitaph demonstrated, the fact that Mi Jifen's son was a monk implies that his household, that is the father and other siblings, were Christian too.¹⁷⁷
4. The Luoyang commemorative stele mentions five Christians of Sogdian descent.¹⁷⁸ These are:
 - a. "the deceased mother, the lady of the An 安 family from Bukhārā"¹⁷⁹
 - b. "the mother's brother An Shaolian 安少連"¹⁸⁰

¹⁷² As WANG DING, 2006, pp. 151, notes that this name occurs twice.

¹⁷³ WANG DING, 2006, pp. 151, (in the footnote) supplied examples of the personal names with theophoric prefix Yišō found in Manichean manuscript. Possibility of the Yišō'-yān name being Manichean according Wang Ding, is indicated by the fact the name was found in the margin of the Buddhist manuscript.

¹⁷⁴ WANG DING, 2006, pp. 151.

¹⁷⁵ A concise historical survey of Manichaeism in Central Asia and China including the bibliographic references is found in LIEU, 1998.

¹⁷⁶ JIANG BOQIN 1994.

¹⁷⁷ GE CHENGYONG, 2001, pp.181-186, annotated English translation at NICOLINI-ZANI, 2004, pp. 181-196.

¹⁷⁸ A full study of the Luoyang stele is found in NICOLINI-ZANI, 2009, pp.99-140.

¹⁷⁹ NICOLINI-ZANI, 2009, pp.116.

¹⁸⁰ NICOLINI-ZANI, 2009, pp.118.

- c. “[the clergyman] of the Da Qin 大秦 Monastery: Xuanying 玄應, Harmony of the Doctrine, head of the monastery, whose secular family name is Mi 米”¹⁸¹
- d. [the clergyman] “Xuanqing 玄慶, Great Virtue of Respect-Inspiring Deportment, whose secular family name is Mi”¹⁸²
- e. [the clergyman] “Zhitong 志通, Great Virtue of the Nine Grades, whose secular family name is Kang 康”¹⁸³

The evidence about the Sogdian church and its organization in both China and the homeland of the Sogdians is fragmentary. Nevertheless, it is safe to assume that when Christianity was realized in China as a ‘Persian teaching’ (*Bosijiao* 波斯教) it also incorporated the Sogdian trajectory. In particular, if the term ‘Persian Teaching’ implied the linguistic characteristics of the faith, then one may think that the common language of preachers or evangelists was Persian. Although the presence of other Persianate communities in China at this time is known, Sogdians would still have been the majority. Accordingly, one can think that the ‘Persian’ identity of Christianity in China was presented through Sogdian agency.

The Persian characteristics of Christianity are also consistent with the Sogdian Christian texts, which have preserved a few examples of technical vocabulary (this is discussed further below). These Persian elements perhaps indicate the fact that the Christianisation of Sogdiana was carried out by either bilingual, Syriac-Persian or indigenous Persian missionaries.

The Sogdians were equally familiar with both Persians and Chinese from both the linguistic and cultural points of view. This ‘closeness’ undoubtedly enabled them to become instrumental in both mediating the integration of the Persian missionaries into China as well as spreading Christianity. As Ge Chengyong in his recent study of the Xian and Luoyang Christian monuments has remarked, “[a]lmost all the Nestorian missionaries in Chang’an were senior monks sent by the Church of the East. The followers who did preaching were all Sogdians.”¹⁸⁴

The presence of Sogdian Christians is unambiguous only in the Luoyang stele where their secular family names are also mentioned. On the other hand, considering that in the Church of the East tradition inductees nearly always adopted Syriac names when they took their monastic vows, no matter what their ethnic background, it is probable that some of the clergy in Chang’an was of Sogdian heritage. Could the “Gabri‘el, priest and archdeacon, and head

¹⁸¹ NICOLINI-ZANI, 2009, pp.118.

¹⁸² NICOLINI-ZANI, 2009, pp.118.

¹⁸³ NICOLINI-ZANI, 2009, pp.118.

¹⁸⁴ GE CHENGYONG, 2013, pp.168.

of the Church of Kumdan and Sarag”¹⁸⁵ mentioned earlier have been one of the Sogdian clergy? It is difficult to discern this, but in the light of the Luoyang inscription naming the Sogdians with Mi and Kang surnames as masters in the church, one may assume that Sogdians did occupy high clergy offices in the church in China.

In addition, the activities of Sogdian translators are also known in the commercial and official (political) spheres. Commercial translators were Sogdians working in the markets or hired by foreign envoys visiting China.¹⁸⁶ There are several historical examples affirming that many Sogdians pursued the profession of commercial translators.¹⁸⁷ These interpreters are among those in Valerie Hansen’s description ‘working full-time with traders’ as there was always an acute need for tax and border control officials to interact with people traveling in and out of China.¹⁸⁸ This is exemplified by the travel permits issued to a group of merchants from Tukharistan and Sogdiana in 685 CE. A travel permit was necessary for all foreign visitors planning to travel into other parts of China apart from their original destination of arrival. Travel passes or permits were issued by the Chinese administration (*gosuo* 過所) stationed at the border. The group in question consisted of five individuals and was led by a Sogdian named Kang (altogether there were three Sogdians in this group). The travel permit issued to them indicates the name of the interpreter as Di Nanipan.¹⁸⁹ Although the translator’s last name Di is standard designation “for the descendants of the indigenous Gaoju” people, his first name Nanipan echoes the Sogdian Nanai-farn ‘the glory of goddess Nana’ may be considered to suggest his Sogdian heritage, i.e. his linguistic ability indicates his ethnic background.¹⁹⁰ The majority of travellers in the group for which he was hired to interpret and translate the travel permits were Sogdians.¹⁹¹ Thus it is possible that Di Nanipan translated/interpreted between Chinese and Sogdian.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁵ PELLIOU 1984, pp. 57, the sentence is found in discussion of the Syriac text of the stele.

¹⁸⁶ LUNG, 2011 provides a very comprehensive sketch on the role of the interpreters in tribute, trade and diplomatic interactions of China and other countries.

¹⁸⁷ HANSEN, 2005, pp. 296, (in the footnote) indicated that there are at least four documents surviving from Turfan recording interpreter. However, what is not clear is whether the interpreter was hired by the Chinese officials or directly by the people who needed them.

¹⁸⁸ HANSEN, 2005, pp. 294-300.

¹⁸⁹ HANSEN, 2005, pp. 296.

¹⁹⁰ HANSEN, 2005, pp. 296.

¹⁹¹ The Tang law also demanded guarantors (usually from local residents) on occasion of travel permit issue. As, VAISSIÈRE, 2005, pp. 180-181, has pointed out “they were guaranteed by five citizens from cities of the region—Turfan, Beshbalik, Hami, Qomul and Qarashahr—who very probably were locally settled caravaneers, four of whom bore Sogdian names.” This fact, that the guarantors were Sogdian, also indicates that the interpreter translated between Sogdian and Chinese thus affirming his ethnic background.

¹⁹² An indication to the familiarity of the Sogdian language and religion in Tukharistan region is also reflected in earlier mentioned speech of the Chaghanian ambassador.

Another example of Sogdians pursuing commercial translation/interpreting as a vocation is found in the biography of a famous Sogdian, or rather a mixed-raced Sogdian-Türk, An Lushan. To follow his biography given by Pulleyblank, the reader learns that An Lushan was adopted by his uncle, An Bozhu, and worked as a commercial interpreter in the markets of military zones in Northeast China.¹⁹³

At the Tang court, there were Sogdian official translators/interpreters who translated or interpreted for diplomatic visitors or prepared diplomatic letters for dispatch.¹⁹⁴ The only material evidence of this group of Sogdian translators is the famous epitaph of the Shi family, where Shi Hedan is recorded to be the official court translator during the Tang Dynasty.¹⁹⁵ The official translators during the Tang Dynasty period were hired by the 'Court of Diplomatic Receptions,' which was subordinated to the 'Department of State Affairs'.¹⁹⁶ The Court of the Diplomatic Receptions was the first point of contact with foreign envoys and visitors and "recruited twenty translators, who "ranked no higher than the seventh tier" in the traditional nine-tier hierarchy."¹⁹⁷ Thus these people were well integrated into not only Chinese culture and society, but also the political hierarchy.

Conclusion

This chapter has laid the platform for the dissertation. It has shown that Sogdians and Sogdiana were known in history from Achaemenid times. The Greeks and later the Arabs encountered them in their military campaigns; the Chinese and Turks came to know them in their neighbourly relations often involving political sovereignty and commerce.

¹⁹³ The early life of An Lushan is found in PULLEYBLANK, 1955, pp. 7-14, 19. However, giving the reason that ascribing Sogdians with 'commercial vocations of various sort' is one of the Chinese stereotypes, he rejected the fact that he was commercial interpreter. On the hand his family background and his successful military career strongly affirms this aspect of his biography; that is at certain point working as commercial interpreter.

¹⁹⁴ LUNG, 2011, dealing with the issue of translation history and interpreters in China is a unique resource for understanding the role of interpreters and translators in China. In particular, the discussions on the use of translators in a political context at court or by embassies coming to Chinese court are insightful. The work includes several important episodes related to Sogdian translators in China working in a secular/political context.

¹⁹⁵ The family burial of Shi family was excavated between 1982 and 1987 where seven tombs were recovered. The epitaph of the Shi family indicates the names and occupation of the members of this family who were a military service member, a sabao, a translator and a horse-breeder. For discussion and relevant bibliographic references, see VAISSIÈRE, 2005, pp. 211-213. It should be noted that Sogdians were not the only translators working for the Chinese imperial government, but there were multitude of other ethnic groups working in this occupation. LUNG, 2001, pp. 62 remarked, "almost all translators working in the Secretariat mentioned in Tang standard histories had exotic names, which were likely Chinese transliterations. These foreign-sounding names indicated that they were probably all non-Chinese by ethnicity".

¹⁹⁶ LUNG, 2001, pp.63.

¹⁹⁷ LUNG, 2001, pp.63.

Due to their historical concentration in the vast Central and Inner Asian territory, linking West and East, the Sogdians entered the major literary traditions of Asia and the Middle East, such as Syriac, Arabic, Persian and Chinese.

Following the introduction of Sogdiana into European scholarship in 1877 through Tomaschek's geographical-historical work *Sogdiana*, the early twentieth century discoveries of Sogdian texts opened a completely new dimension for the understanding of Sogdian civilization: a cultural world that spanned from the Zarafshān and Qashka Darya river basins to Turfan, Dunhuang and Luoyang in China.

Sogdian culture was at its zenith between the fifth and ninth centuries when its local agricultural-based economy grew into one of the influential cultures of the 'Silk Roads' realm supported by local and international trade. In this the Sogdian language provided a vital connecting element between various nations in the region and can be seen as the *lingua franca* of medieval Central Asia.

The involvement of Sogdians in intercontinental trade brought them into close contact with different ethno-linguistic groups and cultures. The influence of Sogdians touched nearly all aspects of life in the Central Asian landmass, such as literacy, religions, commerce and diplomacy. Furthermore, over and above a political entity, the Sogdians founded an intellectual empire that gave rise to a multifaceted culture, combining a diverse range of cultural elements under its aegis.

Religion in Sogdian culture had a significant role. Religious themes are a topic of Sogdian art and the overwhelming majority of surviving Sogdian texts is also religious. Speaking of religious life in Sogdian culture it is interesting to note that Sogdians accommodated all kinds of religions. On one hand the archaeological data indicates the prevalence of Zoroastrianism among the Sogdians, especially in Sogdiana proper. On the other hand, the religious texts indicate the equal prosperity of Buddhism, Manichaeism and Christianity.

Despite the availability of evidence demonstrating the significance and influence of various religions in Sogdian culture, calculating the numbers of adherents of these religions remains difficult. Nevertheless, it is clear that there were multiple religious communities living both in Sogdiana proper and in the diaspora. The evidence above has shown in particular that Christians in China, as recognized by their last names, hailed from various principalities in Sogdiana, such as Bukhara, Maimurg and Samarqand. This evidence may also be taken to suggest the existence of family ties and relationships between these Sogdian Christians living abroad and Sogdians in their homeland. In particular, the preservation of their family names

is significant as it demonstrates the Sogdians' identification with their native countries, where perhaps they had also converted to Christianity.

CHAPTER TWO: COINS CONVEY A MESSAGE: NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE FOR ‘SOGDIAN CHRISTIANITY’

Introduction

This chapter examines a group of Sogdian coins and asks one overarching question: what does the numismatic evidence tell us about the history and place of Christianity in mediaeval Sogdiana during the 5th - 9th centuries?

To address this question, the chapter will focus on up-to-date discoveries of Sogdian coins displaying Christian iconography, especially the use of the cross. The Christian semantic of the cross in Sogdian coins is determined on the basis of an historical comparative examination of attestations of this symbol in material culture objects discovered in various regions where this symbol was used as a conventional symbol for Christianity.

The coins discussed in this chapter were either surveyed by the author during the fieldwork, or have been accessed through specialist literature. Over and above their value as a monetary product, the prime interest of this discussion about these coins is as historical evidence. Rather than discussing issues with which numismatic research is normally concerned, such as questions of weight, chronological development and metrology, this chapter explores the role of coins outside their economic context as the means of trade or face-value, by placing them into their religious and cultural contexts, thus revealing their message, representation and role in relation to ‘Sogdian Christianity’.

Sogdian coins bearing Christian motifs (iconography)

Sogdian coins that bear Christian motifs have been found at Varakhsha, Paykent, Qum-Sovtan, Afrāsiāb, Panjikent and Osrušana. Judging from their topography, the area of their circulation was limited to the regions where they were discovered. Hence, they appear to have been local currencies used for local commercial transactions.¹⁹⁸ On the basis of their design and typology, these coins were issued no later than the seventh-eighth centuries.¹⁹⁹ The main connection of these coins with Christianity is affirmed on basis of their

¹⁹⁸ However, it should be noted that not all the coins discussed have an exact archeological context, that is, a find-spot. Some were found on the ground surface and are designated as casual/chance finds. However, they were all found in the archaeological sites that historically belonged to either Bukhara Sogd (Varakhsha, Paykent, Qum-Sovtan), or Samarqand Sogd (Afrasiab, Panjikent, Osrušana). For more information see LO MUZIO, 2009, pp.43-68, which provides a comprehensive survey of the archeological finds and sites of the Bukhara (particularly numismatic finds), including relevant bibliographic references on the topic.

¹⁹⁹ The dates for the coins are assigned on the basis of comparative examination of the various coin types known in Sogdiana and in these specific regions where the coins were found. For discussion see NAYMARK, 1996, pp.11-13.

iconography. The main monetary iconographies of the Sogdian coins examined in this chapter are:

1. Depiction of an animal (lion, deer, or an unidentified animal) and a human figure on the obverse.²⁰⁰
2. An equilateral cross with broadening extremities (on reverse and obverse depending on coin type/group).
3. A tamgha- a special emblem specific to various regions of Sogdiana.
4. A Sogdian legend/inscription.
5. A Chinese character *yuán* ‘元’ (in ‘Sogdian-Chinese’ coins issued in Bukhara).

These coins are designated as ‘Christian’ primarily based on the use of the equilateral cross with broadening extremities in their iconography.²⁰¹ This form of the cross, which in some literature on Christian iconography is also referred to as ‘paw cross’ (*croix patée* - the term to be used henceforth), is formed by joining together isosceles triangles’ apexes inward and has ‘arms’ of equal length.²⁰² However, in various objects of material culture it also displays variations in size and design.



Figure 1: the samples of the *croix patée* on iconography of Sogdian coins.

Cross: a Christian symbol or a gemoteric sign

The association of the coins examined here with Christianity depends on the interpretation of the sign of the cross as a Christian symbol. However, considering that cross as a simple geometric pattern may have been used merely as decorative device without any particular

²⁰⁰ NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 184, concluded that all the coins in the ‘Bukhara Group 1’ series bear the image of a lion, although, due to the physical conditions of the coins, in some of them it is hard to identify which animal is depicted.

²⁰¹ The first such attribution to these coins was made by SMIRNOVA, 1957, pp. 133, who published the first two examples of coin with the sign of the cross discovered in Sogdiana.

²⁰² A description given of the Ethiopian crosses BUXTON, 1970, pp. 164-166, that also points to the origin of this form of the cross as Syro-Palestinian. The iconography of the crosses on Sogdian coins bear a close resemblance to the crosses depicted on Axumite coins as well as pictorial crosses worn in Ethiopia. The most recent study on the topic with a detailed survey of literature is NACKI, 2006.

religious connotation makes it necessary to justify why the crosses on Sogdian coins examined here are considered to be a Christian symbol.

1. Majority of the examples of the use of the cross in Central Asian have secure Christian context

The first comparative evidence for attribution of the sign of the cross on Sogdian coins as Christian symbol is provided by the corpus of grave epitaphs, datable to 13th-14th century CE that was unearthed in two cemeteries in the Semirechye region in 1885-1886.²⁰³ The tables below show the diversity of form and iconographic styles of the crosses used (known) in Christian art of the region in the 13th-14th centuries.

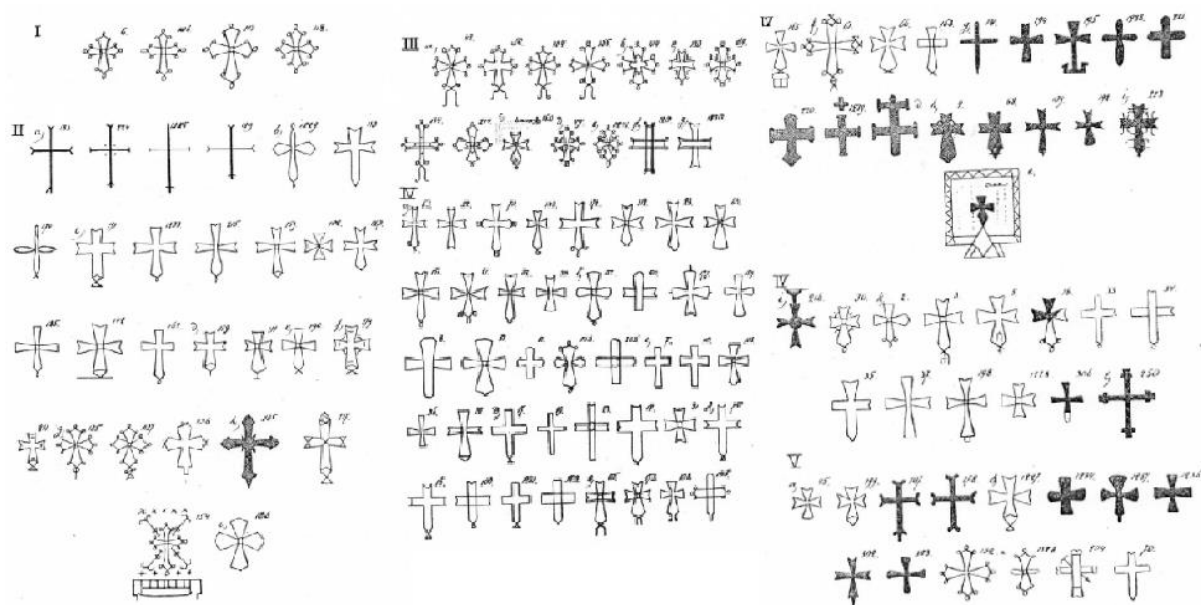


Figure 2: samples of the crosses depicted on 13th and 14th century epitaphs from Semirechye, reproduced after Sluckiy, 1889.

In addition to the Sogdian coins, the use of the equilateral cross is also attested in other archaeological material from Sogdiana, such as the incised inscriptions from Urgut, a mould for making crosses and in the form of the wearable crosses which are discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

²⁰³ The major studies on these grave epitaphs are those carried out by Chwolson (CHWOLSON, 1886, *ibid*, 1887a, pp. 84-109, *ibid*, 1887b, pp.303-308, *ibid*, 1890, *ibid*, 1895, pp.115-129, *ibid*, 1897). A recent comprehensive study of this corpus of epitaphs was undertaken by DZHUMAGULOV, 1963, *ibid*, 1982. A survey of research on these gravestones is also found in DICKENS, 2009a, pp. 13-17.



Figure 3: the *croix patée* depicted on a rock together with an inscription at the site of Qizil-qiya, Urgut. Reproduced after Savchenko, 2008.

A similar form of the cross is also depicted in Sogdian Christian fragments as well Syriac texts from Turfan. Because of their fragmentary nature, it is difficult to determine the function of the cross on these manuscripts; that is whether it was a decorative device or had some other significance e.g. marking a verso and recto. In either case, given their context of use in Christian manuscripts it is clear that this was a widespread conventional symbol used by Christians.



Figure 4: drawing of the cross on Sogdian fragment *So12510/verso* reproduced after Reck, 2008



Figure 5: drawing of the cross on Syriac fragments from Turfan (SyrHT45-47)

In addition, the symbol of the cross is used as religious ornament in Sogdian ossuaries, where some were found with other Christian material objects such as a pendant cross. Sogdian ossuaries represent diverse decorative elements. These elements were inserted to the ossuaries before the clay was fired. The surviving body of Sogdian ossuaries displays ornamentation of vegetal and geometric, architectural, anthropomorphic, and zoomorphic. Most of these ornaments are presented either in combination or individually. Amongst these great diversity of decorative motif a particular element that here is presented as religious symbol rather than geometric motif is the depiction of the equilateral cross. The cross symbol in Sogdian ossuaries are depicted in two distinct forms:

1. Equilateral crosses with broadening extremities
2. *Croix patée* with elongated vertical part

The forms of the crosses depicted on Sogdian ossuaries are similar to the depiction of cross on Sogdian coins and the gravestones found in Semirechye region. The comparable example to the Sogdian ossuaries where the symbol of the cross is used evidently as a Christian symbol is provided by a group of ossuaries discovered at the necropolis of Mizdakhkan, Chorasmia.²⁰⁴

The crosses in Sogdian ossuaries are incised by a sharp object and sometimes are ‘cut-through’ creating hole. The line formed around the drawing of the cross indicated that it is made using special cross cast. Usually the crosses are depicted either against other decorative designs or solo under the arcade composition.



Figure 6: Forms of the crosses depicted on Sogdian ossuaries

²⁰⁴ YAGODIN & KHADZHAYOV, 1970

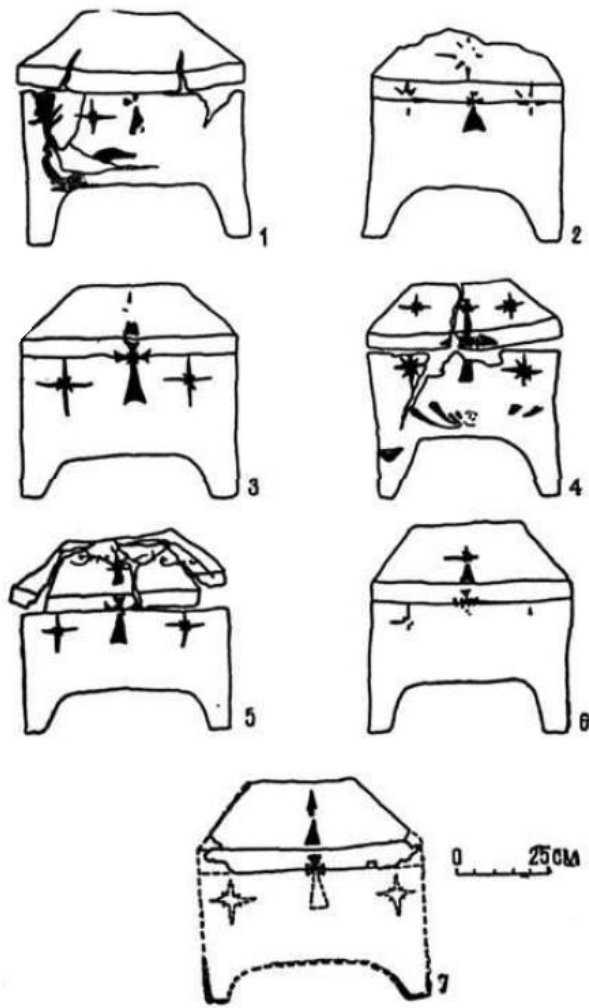


Figure 7: Ossuaries from Mizakhkan. Drawings after Yagodin & Khadzhayov, 1970, pp. 145, fig. 53

Furthermore, the Christian motif of the sign of the cross in Sogdian coins is determined through the recognition of similar Christian monetary iconography in material culture of the Sassanid period, such as on seals and coins.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ For the use of the cross in the seals from Sassanid Iran see SHAKED, 1977, pp. 17-31; LERNER, 1977; GIGNOUX, 1980, pp. 299-314; SPIER, 1997, pp. 33-43; GYSELEN, 2006, pp.17-78. The Sassanid coins discovered in Marv are discussed in LOGINOV & NIKITIN, 1993, pp.271-313. For a discussion on Sassanid coins from Alexandria see GÖBL, 1971, pp.20-21.



Figure 8: examples of the *croix patée* used in the Sassanid seals, reproduced after Gyselen, 2006

The examples given above demonstrate both the diversity of iconographic representation of the symbol of cross (both simple as well as elaborate with floral designs and additional elements) and also diversity of the contexts in which the cross was used. Whilst some of the crosses used in seals and coins from the Eastern and Western Iran demonstrate inclusion of the Zoroastrian elements, such as ribbons, the crosses from Central Asia have other ornamental devices, such as star.

For interpretation of the cross as a Christian symbol both the immediate context in which the symbol is used as well any other comparable evidence is important. From the existing evidence particular evidence in which the use of the cross is not a Christian symbol, but more of astral or geometric ornament is attested by archaeological finds deriving from Kuiruq-tobe, a bordering region with Čač, datable to 8th century. This artifact, a wood carved panel depicting the ‘scene of siege’, in which Karl Baipakow saw parallel to Manichean stories portrays a possibly fourhanded divinity, resembling Nana. The cross is depicted in two sides of the head of the ‘divinity’.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ BAIPAKOV, 1986, pp. 56-57.

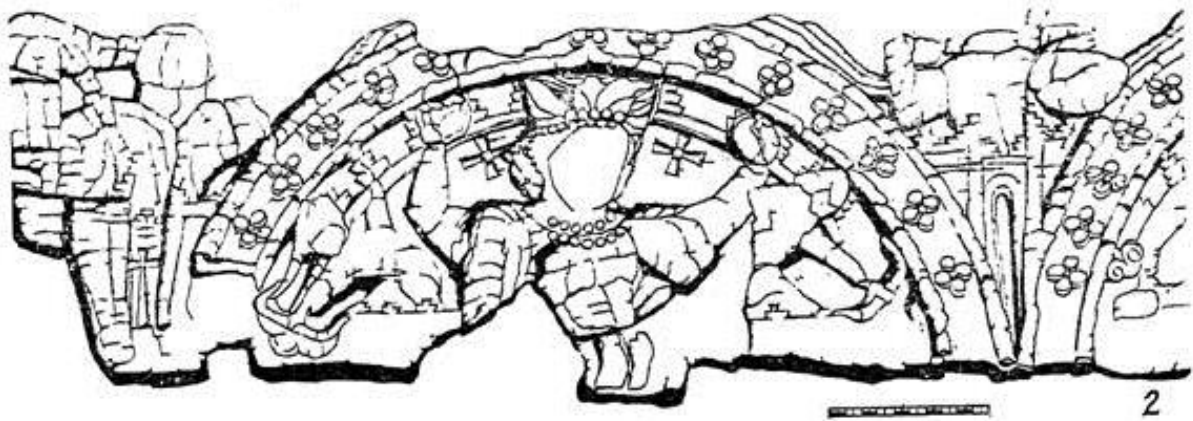


Figure 9: Frise depicting Nana/Anahita with crosses from two sides, reproduced after Baipakov, 1986

Origins of the use of the cross as a Christian symbol in coins

For the origins of the use of the cross as a Christian symbol on coinage one has to look to the West, to the Roman Empire, where Christianity, from the early fourth century, had gained political affiliation. Although classical sources point to the possibility of Philip the Arab (244-249 CE) being the first Christian emperor, from a numismatic perspective it was Constantine (306-337 CE) who first incorporated Christian symbolism into the Roman monetary tradition.²⁰⁷ The first explicitly Christian symbol that was introduced into coinage of the Roman Empire was the *Chi-Rho* sign that first appears on a rare issue of the silver medallion of the year 315 CE, two years after the famous *Edictum Mediolanense* that declared ‘imperial’ favour on Christianity.²⁰⁸

At this stage, Christian symbols as central iconography in Constantine coins were still rare, possibly due to the fact that many of the symbols were still evolving or had yet to become a standard. Mark Dunning has pointed out that, “of approximately 1,363 coins of Constantine I in RIC VII, covering the period of 313-337, roughly one percent might be classified as

²⁰⁷Eusebius the fourth century bishop of Caesarea designates Philip as the first Christian emperor (WILLIAMSON, 1990, pp. 205-206). However, the anonymous *Origo Constantini* (LIEU & MONSERRAT, 1996, pp. 48) casts doubts on the personal motivation of Philip. In particular, it states that “this Constantine was the first Christian Emperor except for Philip (the Arab) who, or so it seems to me, became Christian simply in order that the thousandth year of Rome might be said to belong to Christ rather than to idols.” In a similar manner one may interpret the inscription of the coins issued in the name of Salonina, wife of Gallienus the Roman emperor (260-268 CE), which reads AVE IN PACE, to have Christian overtones. However this requires a more substantial historical basis that at the present is not available. For the latter see MATTINGLY *et al*, 58.

²⁰⁸A more recent summary discussion of the topic, including images and relevant bibliography is found in DUNNING, 2003, pp. 6-26.

having Christian symbols.”²⁰⁹ Some of the unambiguous Christian symbols found in Constantine’s coins include *Chi-rho* and other forms of the Christian crosses (*Chi-X*, *Tau-T* or the equilateral (Latin) cross). These iconographies were often used as filed marks; a symbol subordinated to the main image, such as a bust of the emperor, depicted in the centre of the coin face.²¹⁰ The establishment of the cross as the prominent iconographic symbol associated with Christianity in the Roman monetary tradition was only gradual and took nearly a century.²¹¹ This process is exemplified by the coins of Emperor Tiberius II (578-582 CE), which depict the equilateral cross with broadened extremities on a stepped platform.²¹² In subsequent centuries, from the period of Heraclius (610-641 CE),²¹³ the cross became a standardized Christian monetary icon, designed to represent the ‘triumphal cross’ - a jewelled cross that is thought to have been erected on Golgotha (the site of Jesus’ crucifixion) by Theodosius II (408-450).²¹⁴



Figure 10: coin of Tiberius II²¹⁵



Figure 11: coin of Heraclius²¹⁶

Another early monetary tradition in which the cross was used as an explicitly Christian symbol is that of the Axumite kingdom in northern Ethiopia, represented by the coins of Enzana (ca. 320-330 C.E.), a contemporary of Roman emperor Constantine, who converted

²⁰⁹ DUNNING, 2003, pp. 6.

²¹⁰ Comparing the use of the cross in the coins of Constantine from 316 CE with those of his later successors, in the coins of Constantine, the cross is not used as a central iconographic device, but as an addition to the central iconography, which is Roman-Greek deities or imagery.

²¹¹ GRIERSON, 1999, pp. 32.

²¹² WROTH, 1966, plate XXIII, fig. 2-12.

²¹³ WROTH, 1966, pp. LXXXVI, plate XVI, fig. 16, 18; GRIERSON, 1968, pp. 95-96.

²¹⁴ GRABAR, 1946, pp. 275-276.

²¹⁵ Image reproduced from <http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/sb/i.html> (accessed on 12, July 2012). AV Solidus of Tiberius II Constantine (578-582 CE)

²¹⁶ Image reproduced from <http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/sb/i.html> (accessed on 12, July 2012). AV Solidus of Heraclius and Heraclius Constantine (610-641 CE).

to Christianity circa 324 CE. Prior to his conversion to Christianity, Enzana's coins depicted his bust with a star and crescent above his head, but these solar symbols were replaced after his conversion by a cross, in form and style similar to the cross depicted in the Sogdian coins discussed here. Enzana's successors, similar to Constantine, subsequently promoted the cross as the main monetary iconography, used solely on the reverse. The forms of the crosses used include Greek, Latin, *croix patée* and two crosses superimposed.²¹⁷



Figure 12: coins of Enzana from before (left) and after (right) his conversion²¹⁸

The borrowing of the iconography of the cross in Sogdian coinage

In Sogdian numismatics the phenomenon of the use of the cross in coinage iconography is generally thought to be the product of Byzantine influence. This view is likely based on two suppositions: 1. Byzantine was one of the earliest Christian states whose coinage displayed the use of cross; and 2. the familiarity of the Sogdians with Byzantine monetary culture (economy).²¹⁹ However, considering the close and long-historical ties between Sogdiana and the Sassanid Empire, it is worth considering whether the direct impetus came through Sassanid coins and other material culture objects, such as seals.

Prior to its spread to Sogdiana, Christianity took root throughout Iran, where its influence is also attested in material culture objects, such as seals and coins. Some examples from Sassanid sigillography have been given above, where the cross is used as the central symbol

²¹⁷ For a comprehensive discussion, including images and pertinent bibliography see LOWICK, 1970, pp. 148-151 in particular pp. 149. Another discussion of the subject in the overall context of the Axum civilization is found in MUNRO-HAY, 1991, pp. 189-192; *ibid*, 1995, nos. 41, 44-47. According to ANZANI, 1926, pp. 23, the iconography of the equilateral cross on Ethiopian coinage, as an indication of the Christian identity of the ruler, was used continually for several centuries.

²¹⁸ Image reproduced from 'The Wealth of Africa: Kingdom of Aksum, The British Museum' available at http://www.britishmuseum.org/pdf/KingdomOfAksum_Presentation.pdf (accessed on 12, July 2012)

²¹⁹ The evidence supporting this view includes the historical texts on trade connections between the Central Asian people and Byzantine as well as the archeological discovery of Byzantine coins (imitations and bracteates) in Sogdiana. SHKODA, 1983, pp.196-201 provides further discussion and bibliographic references on this issue in connection with the Byzantine imitation discovered in Panjikent. In particular, SHKODA, 1983, pp.198-199 points out that "the main reason for the flow of the Byzantine coins in Central Asia was the growth of trade relations in the early medieval period. In this period, Byzantine gold coins, like silver Sassanid coins, were an international currency." The issue is also discussed in RASPOPOVA, 1999, pp.453-460, RTVELADZE, 1999b, pp. 22-28.

accompanied by the inscription, usually indicating the name of the seal owner. Other imagery observed in Sassanid seals includes generic biblical themes, such as ‘the sacrifice of Isaac’ or ‘Daniel in the lions’ den’.²²⁰ However, not all the Sassanid seals where the symbol of cross is used can be designated as ‘Christian’, for “there are many Sassanian seals with non-Christian imagery that also display these crosses.”²²¹ However, as Lerner has concluded “[when] such crosses, used as a filler, especially within depictions of the Old Testament theme of the Sacrifice of Isaac, most likely mark the seal as Christian and not Jewish.”²²²

However, in the light of examples in which symbolism does affirm the use of the cross by Christians, the abovementioned difficulties in hermeneutics and identification of the imagery used in some Sassanian seals do not overly affect the strength of argument here.²²³

In Sassanid coinage, the use of the *croix patée* is known from at least three regional issues of Sassanid coins:

1. Coins issued in Alexandria, during the Sassanid occupation of Egypt (619 CE- 628/9 CE). Judging by their design, these coins imitate the Byzantine coinage type.²²⁴ The iconography of these coins on the obverse displays the cross rising from the crescent on the headdress of the ruler; and on the reverse the cross is flanked by the characters ‘I’ and ‘B’.²²⁵



Figure 13: Sassanid coins bearing Christian iconography issued in Alexandria (OV: bust of the king with the headdress and cross rising from his headdress; AV: inscription and cross), reproduced after Göbl, 1971.

²²⁰ The review-article by LERNER, 2009, pp. 653-664 provides a comprehensive assessment of the religious themes displayed by the Sassanid seals.

²²¹ LERNER, 2009, pp.660.

²²² LERNER, 2009, pp.659-660.

²²³ Significant contributions to the subject of Sassanid seals depicting Christian imagery include CHABOUILLET 1858, pp. 191(fig. 1330-1332); BORISOV, 1939, pp. 235-242; BIVAR, 1969, pp. 29; SHAKED, 1977, pp. 17-31; LERNER, 1977; GYSELEN, 2006, pp.17-78. The Pahlavi inscriptions attested in Sassanid seals include mainly proper names and short religious formulas, such as *b (r)šb'y 'pst'n 'L yzdy* – ‘Bar-Šabbā. Reliance on God.’

²²⁴ GÖBL, 1971, pp. 21.

²²⁵ GÖBL, 1971, Table XII, Plate 14, fig. 222.



Figure 14: Sassanid coins bearing Christian iconography issued in Alexandria. Possible iconographic and typological development; reproduced after Göbl, 1971

2. Coins issued in Marv, on the eastern frontiers of the Sassanid Empire. This group is represented by twenty well preserved specimens of bronze coins of Yazdgard I (399-420 CE).²²⁶ These coins, on the obverse, display the king's portrait, with his usual crown with one merlon in the middle, surmounted by a globe and a large crescent above the forehead. On the reverse they have a cross, mounted with a crescent, two ribbons rising from its foundation up its sides, surrounded by a circular dotted border. On some coins, the name of the king, *yzdkrty* is inscribed in Pahlavi.²²⁷ Sergej Loginov and Alexander Nikitin, in their studies of these coins, have opined that, "the representation of the cross in the centre of the reverse design is too distinct to be an auxiliary element of device. There is reason to believe that it is linked with the spread of Christian religion in Iran, especially as there are similar crosses represented on some Christian Sassanian seals, also displaying side ribbons."²²⁸



Figure 15: Sassanid coins with Christian iconography issued in Marv, reproduced after Nikitin & Loginov, 1993

3. Coins issued in Georgia, an Iberia/Kartli kingdom in the East of the country. The majority of the coins known were found in Mtskheta and date between the fifth and

²²⁶ For concise discussion on Marv in relation to coins of various Sassanid kings issued there see ALRAM & GYSELEN, 2012, pp. 21-23.

²²⁷ LOGINOV & NIKITIN, 1993, pp. 271-313, fig. 11 nos. 10-30.

²²⁸ LOGINOV & NIKITIN, 1993, pp. 271-272.

seventh centuries.²²⁹ There are about 30 hoards of Sassanid coins registered in Georgia. The majority of Sassanian coin findings in Georgia come from the hoard discovered in 1977 in Tsitelitskaro. Sassanid coins made their first appearance in the territory of Georgia in early third century.²³⁰ The Sassanid coins without chronological gap from the fifth to seventh century, discovered in Georgia include those of Peroz I (459-484 CE) and Khosrau II (590-628 CE).²³¹

According to political history, this period spans the time of the Byzantine and Iranian wars and it is possible that these coins came into circulation in Eastern Georgia during its occupation by the Sassanian armies. The coins bearing Christian iconography (the cross) in Georgia are those minted following the Hormizd IV silver drachms issued by the local governors (erismtavars). The next issues of Georgian-Sassanian drachms were struck according to coins of Khosrau II. The cross in Sassanid coins from Georgia first appeared on the obverse, similar to the coins from central Iran discussed below. Later, the symbol of the cross appeared above the fire altar instead of flames on the reverse. Later anonymous coins from Georgia also show the cross on a stepped platform, in the pattern of Byzantine iconography.²³²



Figure 16: drachm of Hormizd IV from Georgia, collection of the State Hermitage Museum, reproduced after Kolesnikov, 2006

Sassanid coins bearing Christian iconography from the central Iran

In addition, Sassanid coins with Christian iconography are known from the south-western and central Iranian provinces. This group include both copper coins and silver drachms. In silver

²²⁹ The Sassanid coin hoards and individual samples discovered in Georgia has been published in TSOTSELIA, 2002, *ibid*, 2003.

²³⁰ However, the specimens from this chronology i.e. early Sassanid coins, are rare and most of them were found in burials. This indicates that the 3rd-5th century Sassanid coins came to Georgia as tribute exchange.

²³¹ For historical background and concise information on Sassanid, coin hoards from Georgia see TSOTSELIA, 2003, pp. 5-26. Considering the isolated specimens the Sassanid coins from Georgia represent from Aradishir (224-240 CE) to Yazdgard III (628-630 CE). The individual specimens include gold commemorative coins as well.

²³² TSOTSELIA, 2002.

drachms, the cross is inserted in the field left from the bust of the king on the obverse side. Out of 460 specimens of the silver drachms of Hormizd IV (579-590 CE) held in the numismatic section of the State Hermitage Museum, 30 specimens display crosses in their iconography. Based on the mintmarks, these coins were issued in 24 mint centres, including Abashar and Susa.²³³ The use of the cross on silver drachms is also known from two specimens of Varahran VI (590-591 CE) with the mintmarks of Herat and Marv. There is also one specimen of Khosrau II (590 CE) with mintmark WYHC (Veh Kawad) displaying a cross in its iconography.²³⁴



Figure 17: Silver drachms of Varahran VI, (I) minted in Herat, (II) minted in Marv, reproduced after Kolesnikov, 2006

In addition to the silver drachm, which was the dominant denomination of the currency of the Sassanid state, the Christian iconography is also displayed in three issues of the copper coins. On the basis of the close resemblance of their iconography with the Byzantine coins, these coins are designated in numismatic scholarship as Byzantine-Sassanid.²³⁵ Among the Arabo-Sassanid coins, in the second half of the seventh century, Christian iconography is present also in the copper coins, which are iconographically very similar to the Byzantine-Sassanid

²³³ KOLESNIKOV, 1998b, pp.207-211.

²³⁴ KOLESNIKOV, 1998b, pp.211.

²³⁵ CURIEL & GYSELEN, 1984, pp. 41-48, *ibid*, 1985, pp. 109-113; KOLESNIKOV, 1998a, pp. 259-262, 299-310.

coins.²³⁶ The iconography of the first type of these coins shows on the obverse, the paired bust (following the iconography of Heraclius coins) with the cross above the bust.



Figure 18: Byzantine-Sassanid coins, reproduced after Curiel & Gyselen, 1984

Implications of the Sassanid coins bearing Christian motifs for the study of Sogdian coins

Sassanid coins bearing Christian iconography are important for the study of Sogdian coins for several reasons:

1. The coins from Marv suggest a fairly accurate start-date for the establishment of the use of the cross on coinage in Persia, namely, from the time of Yazdgard I (339-420 CE). As mentioned, the reign of Yazdgard I (339–420 CE) was marked by the famous Synod of Isaac in 410 CE, which saw the emergence of an independent and officially recognized Christian church in the Sassanid Empire.²³⁷ The decrees issued by this synod allude to the fact that Yazdgard I had extended some form of state patronage to the Church in Persia. Although the testimony of these coins is more suggestive than conclusive, they offer historians material evidence of an economic character representing state patronage. Although Yazdgard I was the principal sovereign of the Sassanid kingdom, his far flung provinces were possibly ruled by local rulers (*marzbāns*?) who appear to have been granted autonomy to mint coins with different reverses than those issued by the central mint.²³⁸ The coins of Yazdgard I have six reverse types, but the majority have depictions of a fire altar with attendants and ribbons; with star and crescent flanking the flames.²³⁹ In the issues of Marv, however, the main religious iconography that is the fire altar is replaced by the cross.

²³⁶ KOLESNIKOV, 1998a, pp. 299-310.

²³⁷ CHABOT, 1902, pp. 253; BAUM & WINKLER, 2003, pp. 14-17; YARSHATER, 2006, pp. 939-940; BROCK, 2006, pp.610-611.

²³⁸ One such local ruler known from numismatic evidence is Ardashir whose administration (reign) of Marv corresponds to that of Shapur I (240-260CE). LOGINOV & NIKITIN, 1993, pp.229-230.

²³⁹ SCHINDEL, 2004, pp. 320-321.

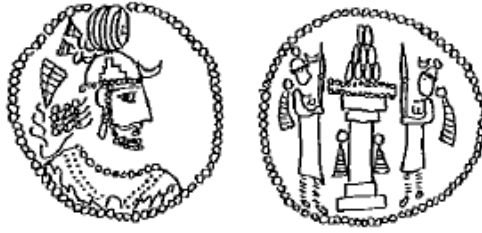


Figure 19: Yazdgard I typeIB2/1a, reproduced after Schindel, 2004

2. Considering the geographical position of Marv, standing half-way to Bukhara, one may posit that these coins may have been familiar in the Bukhara Sogd before the seventh century, when the Sogdian coins with the depiction of *croix patée* were issued. Accordingly, these coins cast new light on the question of whether the use of the cross as religious monetary iconography in Sogdiana was directly borrowed from Byzantine coinage. The archaeological materials suggest the familiarity of Byzantine *bracteates* and coins in Sogdiana, however the coins from Marv point to a closer economic-political zone that could have influenced Sogdiana.
3. The coins from Marv may also be considered to indicate the approximate chronology of the beginning of Christianity's socio-economic, and possibly political, recognition in Marv and beyond.
4. Based on the mintmarks, one may assume that the places where these coins were issued had considerably significant Christian populations. Therefore, they can be interpreted to indicate the local socio-economic status of Christianity in these regions. The similarities of the iconography in the copper coins with a paired bust indicate that the inspiration was drawn from Byzantine coinage. However, this innovation in monetary iconography may have been adapted not as much for political as for social reasons, since the Christian communities of Sassanid Iran comprised both the deported victims of Persian-Roman wars and the indigenous populace; both, however, were subjugate to the Sassanid monarch.
5. In the Alexandria, Georgia and the Marv specimens there are elements of Zoroastrian iconography (a ribbon, a star, a crescent, a fire altar) as well as Christian, primarily the cross, featuring as part of the headdress or used alone as a fieldmark. This interwoven use of symbols suggests a local innovation, and not an import. In other words, such synthesised monetary iconography was not imported from Byzantine

iconography, but emerged as result of local approbation of this iconography and its symbolism in local culture.

6. The use of the Christian symbols in the Sassanid silver drachm, which was not only the local but international currency, is of special interest. As Alii Kolesnikov has argued, the monetary iconography of the Sassanid coinage was regulated by the established monetary canon, which consisted of a portrait of the ruler, Zoroastrian symbols and Pahlavi inscriptions. Thus, the changes in this established and recognized iconography may have not been possible unless approved by the central state.²⁴⁰ This would again support the idea that Christians in Iran, or at least in the places where these drachms and copper coins were issued, were politically influential. Medea Tsotselia considered the shift in monetary iconography in the Sassanid coins in Georgia to indicate the growth of the independence of local governors from the central Sassanid administration.²⁴¹

Past studies on Sogdian coins bearing *croix patée*²⁴²

The first mention of Sogdian coins (here designated ‘Sogdian-Chinese’) dates back to the 1891 work of the French numismatist Edmond Drouin.²⁴³ However, he gave only a verbal description of the coin without any sketch to specify the exact type of this coin; that is, whether or not it bore Christian iconography.²⁴⁴ Sixty-six years later, in 1957, Olga Smirnova published two specimens of Sogdian coins with Christian motifs; one specimen had been discovered at Varakhsha in 1951, and the other specimen discovered at Panjikent in 1955.²⁴⁵ Smirnova described these coins as “a humble witness of Central Asian numismatics, in addition to the already known archaeological evidence, that in the eighth century, two of the Central Asian rulers were Christian.”²⁴⁶ Using the limited amount of evidence known from that time, such as the bronze pendant cross from Afrāsiāb and the Semirechye epitaphs, Smirnova recognized the iconography of the cross on the coin, with the “fantastic beast on

²⁴⁰ KOLESNIKOV, 1998b, pp.207-211.

²⁴¹ TSOTSELIA, 2002, 7-8.

²⁴² Studies that merely make a passing comment of these coins are intentionally left out, due to their overall irrelevance.

²⁴³ DROUIN, 1891, pp. 456.

²⁴⁴ Other finds of Sogdian-Chinese coins are mentioned in ZEYMAL, 1994, pp.247, *ibid*, 1994, pp.265. The latter work also refers to the archaeological report on the discovery of coins in this category in 1953. In general, the ‘Sogdian-Chinese’ coins from Bukhara today are the least researched group of coins. Their research is mainly limited to archaeological reports or short numismatic and historical essays. Some of the studies discussing this coin group are THIERRY, 1997, pp.144-150; *ibid*, 1999, pp.321-349; ZEYMAL, 1994, pp. 245-267; *ibid*, 1996, pp.358-380.

²⁴⁵ SMIRNOVA, 1957.

²⁴⁶ SMIRNOVA, 1957, pp. 133.

one side and the symbol resembling Gregorian cross on the other side” to have associations with Christianity.²⁴⁷ However, after her initial publication reporting the find and design of the coins, Smirnova did not continue the study of these coins, the number of which was subsequently augmented by finds from Varakhsha.

These subsequent finds of Varakhsha coins were examined approximately four decades later in 1991 by Alfiya Musakaeva in her doctoral thesis, of which she devoted a chapter to their discussion.²⁴⁸ In particular, her research focused on twelve specimens of Varakhsha coins with animal and cross iconography. As the scope of her research was the typology and historical periodization of the Western Sogdian (Bukhara) coinage, accordingly she categorized them as one of the types of the Bukhara Sogd coins. Prior to Musakaeva, these coins were generally categorized as coins of Bukhara without specific chronological and typological positioning. Thus, her designation of the coins with the sign of ‘Nestorian crosses’ on the reverse as a separate type issued between the fourth and sixth centuries is remarkable.²⁴⁹ In 1994 she published the twelve samples of the Varakhsha coins earlier discussed in her thesis chapter in a short essay about the history of Christianity in Central Asia.²⁵⁰ However, despite being informative about the coins, type and design, Musakaeva’s research on the Bukhara coins bearing Christian iconography is not comprehensive. In both her thesis chapter and separate essay, she does not provide much detail about how these coins or their monetary iconography are related to Christianity in the historical context of the ‘monetary’ expression of Christianity in Central Asia or in separate regions of the area. Neither does she given contextual discussion on what specifically these coins reveal about the nature or dimension of Christianity in Bukhara, but only refers to other generic secondary literature on the subject. Furthermore, in her research, Musakaeva does not consider similarities in monetary iconography, particularly the equilateral cross found in both the Varakhsha and Sogdian-Chinese coin groups, both deriving from the Bukhara region.

Further progress was made in 1996, when Naymark presented a paper entitled *Christians in Pre-Islamic Bukhara: Numismatic evidence*, to the Oriental Numismatic Society, USA. He reported both coin samples (animal and cross, and the Sogdian-Chinese).²⁵¹ In his opinion, these coins were the local issue of Bukhara, because their quantity (fourteen samples) outnumbers the finds of the coins of other regions, such as Samarqand, issued in Bukhara.

²⁴⁷ SMIRNOVA, 1957, pp. 132-133.

²⁴⁸ MUSAKAEVA, 1991.

²⁴⁹ MUSAKAEVA, 1991, pp. 15. Prior to her research, these coins were generally categorized in catalogue entries or individual archeological reports only.

²⁵⁰ MUSAKAEVA, 1994, pp. 42-55.

²⁵¹ NAYMARK, 1996, pp. 11-13; NAYMARK, 2011, pp. 2-3.

Additionally, this coin type (animal and cross) has not been found anywhere else in Sogdiana.²⁵² Naymark, four years later, returned to the subject of the history of Christianity in Sogdiana, in particular in Bukhara, in his doctoral thesis.²⁵³ The central focus of his dissertation was the artistic connections between Byzantium and Sogdiana manifested in various material culture including coins.

Sogdian monetary tradition

The Sogdian monetary tradition has a long and diverse history of formation, the earliest phase dating to the Achaemenid Era.²⁵⁴ However, between the fifth and the ninth centuries, during which the coins examined in this research were issued, the Sogdian monetary tradition was surrounded by Sassanid, Byzantine and Chinese monetary traditions which influenced its design, type and iconography as well manufacturing techniques and metrology.²⁵⁵ Despite these multiple influences, the medieval monetary tradition of Sogdiana is distinct in the way in which it adopted and assimilated elements from the various coinage traditions.

In antiquity and the early medieval period (the 2nd-5th centuries CE) Sogdian coins developed new reverse types, distinguished by their Zoroastrian motifs. These coins demonstrate the tendency of reverting to the classical Achaemenid culture that began to be revived under the Parthian dynasty and reached its zenith at the time of the Sassanid dynasty (224-651 CE). This tendency is particularly distinguished by the emergence of three distinct monetary iconographies used on the reverse of the coins.²⁵⁶

- 1) King fighting the lion: a common motif of the Achaemenid monumental culture (with Mesopotamian precursors).
- 2) Fire altar: a common religious iconography representing the Zoroastrian worldview of sacred fire.
- 3) Altar surmounted by holy fire with attendant *mobed*, representing the institutionalized religion of the Persian Empire.

The influence of the Persian monetary tradition in Sogdiana continued throughout the Sassanid dynasty (224-651 CE). The silver drachm, one of the derivatives of the Sassanid coinage that was dominant in Sogdiana, was an imitation of the coins of Varahran V (420-

²⁵² NAYMARK, 1996, pp. 11.

²⁵³ NAYMARK, 2001, unpublished.

²⁵⁴ MITCHINER, 1973 discusses the issue of the early coinage of Central Asia. ZEYMAL, 1994, pp.245-267 provides both a short discussion and a relevant bibliography on the circulation of various coins in Central Asia. Particularly for the coins in Samarqand, see ERNAZAROVA, 1974, pp. 155-237. For a concise discussion of the ancient coins of Bukhara and a related bibliography, see RTVELADZE, 1999, pp. 29-38.

²⁵⁵ MITCHINER, 1973, pp. 8-13.

²⁵⁶ BARATOVA *et al*, 2012.

438 CE); the coins in this series, minted in Bukhara, are conventionally designated as Bukhar Khudat coins.²⁵⁷

Additionally, the medieval Sogdian economy saw the birth of a new coinage issue that was completely different by type and manufacturing technique. This coin group, referred to here as ‘Sogdian-Chinese’ in its design, followed that of *Kai Yuan Tong Bao* 开元通宝 - the inaugural currency of the Tang dynasty, characterized by a square hole in middle.²⁵⁸ This coin type was one of the dominant types in medieval Sogdiana, and was issued in Bukhara, Samarqand and Panjikent.²⁵⁹ The genesis of this coin series in Sogdiana is connected with the events of 650-658 CE, when the Tang Dynasty extended its hegemony over Sogdiana and Tukharistan when Varkhuman was on the throne of Samarqand Sogd as the official vassal of the Tang dynasty.²⁶⁰

Judging by the abundant finds of this coin type across the Sogdiana proper, its circulation and production in Sogdiana was firmly established in the mid-seventh and early eighth centuries.²⁶¹ This is also evident in the changes that occurred in the coin design. The design of the ‘Sogdian-Chinese’ coins was altered by adding both a Sogdian inscription (legend) and a tamgha (depending on the mint area e.g. Bukhara or Samarqand). These features (legend and tamgha) distinguish them from the Chinese originals. This process of innovation, namely assimilating the Chinese monetary tradition together with the Sogdian tradition signals the indigenization of the ‘borrowed’ monetary design and iconography elements into the local Sogdian setting.²⁶²

This assimilation may have been beneficial for trade, as the merchants from China and Sogdiana gained great familiarity with coins and their corresponding value in both the Sogdian and Chinese markets. On the other hand, these alterations also demonstrate the

²⁵⁷ The Bukhar Khudat coins were minted as imitations of the Bahram (Varahran) V's coins minted in Marv. LERCH, 1876 provides a classical study for Sassanid coins in Central Asia, in particular on Bukhar Khudat coins. For the Sassanid coins discovered in Marv, including comprehensive reference to the finds in previous years, see LOGINOV & NIKITIN, 1993, pp.271-313. The Most recent documentations of up-to-date known Sassanid coins from various sites including descriptions and a short commentary is found in BARATOVA *et al*, 2012. The concise general discussion on Bukhar Khudat coins, for example of Khunak Bukhar Khudat coins, including relevant bibliographic references is found in NAYMARK, 2010, pp.7-32. Besides Sogdiana, the Sassanid coins are also known from China, for which see SKAFF, 1998, pp. 67-115.

²⁵⁸ The characters ‘Kai yuan’ mean ‘new beginning’, while ‘tong bao’ means ‘circulating treasure’ i.e. ‘coin’. For further discussion see THIERRY, 1998, pp. 25-26.

²⁵⁹ Similar ‘Sogdian-Chinese’ coins were also issued in other adjoining regions of Sogdiana, such as in Semirechye that are known as Turgesh coins and Vakhsh valley in Tokharistan. For further discussions and details including relevant references see: SMIRNOVA, 1963, pp. 40-42; ZEYMAL, 1996, pp. 251-257; THIERRY, 1999, pp. 321-349; KAMYSHEV, 2001, pp. 157-166.

²⁶⁰ BICHURIN, 1950, vol. 2, pp. 311; CHAVANNES, 1903, pp. 135-136; MALYAVKIN, 1989, pp. 77.

²⁶¹ SMIRNOVA, 1981, 35-38.

²⁶² SMIRNOVA, 1981, pp. 35.

strength of the monetary tradition in Sogdiana since it was able to enact a process of reform in its internal mint system.

Furthermore, the introduction of ‘Sogdian-Chinese’ coins within Sogdiana brought two other major changes to the Sogdian coinage tradition:

1. The interruption of an inherited design and iconography. Apart from the ‘Sogdian-Chinese’ coin group, other Sogdian coins follow Sassanid design, imagery and iconography. This perhaps was due to the fact that ‘the square hole’ (the main distinguishing design element of the Sogdian-Chinese type) did not leave enough space for those iconographies specific to the Sassanid tradition to be used.
2. The transition from the old Sogdian coinage technique of striking to the Chinese technique of casting coins.

However, these changes, namely assimilating a new design (squared-hole) and the mint technique (casting) did not terminate the use of other existing Sogdian coins designs. There are coins from the second half of the seventh century, contemporaneous with the ‘Sogdian-Chinese’ coin type in Sogdiana, that were minted using the new or ‘borrowed’ technique of casting, but without a square hole. In their design and iconography these coin series are similar to the preceding series, bearing conventional Sogdian designs depicting human figures, regional tamghas and the fire altar, but differing only in their mint technique.

The Tamgha

During the fifth-ninth centuries, the production of copper coinage in Sogdiana significantly increased. The copper coinage also introduced the new monetary iconography, namely the tamgha, defined by Naymark as “one of the most characteristic features of the Sogdian monetary tradition from the beginning of the fifth to the third quarter of the eighth centuries.”²⁶³ This transformation in monetary iconography probably dawned in Bukhara Sogd, where in the coins of early fifth century Bukhara, tamghas replaced the fire altar; a monetary iconography that most likely was borrowed from Sassanid coinage. The fire altar in Sassanid coins is a symbolic representation of both the official religion of the state and its patron the King, whose image was displayed on the obverse of the coins and whose name was inscribed on the reverse. The earliest appearance of a tamgha in Sogdian coinage can be

²⁶³ NAYMARK, 2005, pp. 225.

traced to the first century BCE on *tetradrachms* of Euthydemus.²⁶⁴ The zenith of its use as main monetary iconography was during the fifth-eighth centuries.²⁶⁵

The origin of the tamgha is generally connected with nomadic cultures. However, despite being studied systematically for over a hundred years, there are still no definite answers as to the functions and semantics of tamghas in their multifaceted usage contexts.²⁶⁶ For example, in Sarmatian tamgha studies, the tamgha is defined as a property mark, though its varied functions are also stressed. Ella Solomonik defined their function as property marks burned on animals' skin,²⁶⁷ while Viktor Drachuk emphasized the function of a tamgha as a 'hallmark' for valuable goods and household items.²⁶⁸ On the other hand, some other comparative studies of tamghas stressed their multi-functionality as Taurus, charms or amulets, a property mark, a political emblem used to mark borders, or in flags as a 'clan/dynasty' symbol, and animal earmarks.²⁶⁹ Sogdian tamghas can be viewed as the legacy of the close socio-cultural and economic-political contacts of the Sogdians with their nomadic-pastoralist neighbours.²⁷⁰

Although it cannot be known for certain whether the tamghas, after being incorporated into the Sogdian milieu, retained their original meaning or not, it is safe to assume that Sogdians understood the meaning of their tamghas in their own context of use as well in relation to the context from which they were borrowed. What can be distinguished in the usage of tamghas in Sogdian numismatics is that they are specific to the coinage of each 'monetary region'; that is the area in which a specific coin type was issued. Consequently, this characteristic has led some scholars, notably Smirnova, to considering the tamgha's function as a 'dynastic sign' for each region whose coin bore one.²⁷¹ However, this view has not found wide support due to the fact that in many Sogdian principalities, such as Panjikent, the rulers were not genealogically related, casting doubt on the notion of the tamgha as a hereditary dynastic symbol.²⁷² Instead, the possible function of a Sogdian tamgha might be defined as the 'sign of a region' i.e. the heraldic symbol unique to each principality (as a badge of the realm), but

²⁶⁴ ZEYMAL, 1978.

²⁶⁵ SMIRNOVA, 1981, pp. 22.

²⁶⁶ YATSENKO, 2001, pp. 4-5; OLKHOVSKIY, 2001, pp. 100.

²⁶⁷ SOLOMONIK, 1959, pp. 210-218.

²⁶⁸ DRACHUK, 1975.

²⁶⁹ YATSENKO, 2001, pp. 8-9, 14.

²⁷⁰ On the cultural interactions of Sogdiana with nomads and the reflection of these interactions in Sogdian art see GYUL, 2005. On the usage of tamghas in Sogdian coinage, NAYMARK, 2005, pp. 226 has remarked that "the principal compositional device - a tamgha in the centre of the reverse surrounded by a circular legend - came from Khorezm, while the shapes of the tamghas themselves imply a connection with the Hephtalites."

²⁷¹ SMIRNOVA, 1963, pp. 15-17. This assumption is primarily based on the iconographic link, or rather development of the tamgha, in coins of various rulers.

²⁷² LIVSHITS, 1979, pp. 56-68; NAYMARK, 2005, pp. 226-230.

without a personal connection to the ruling dynasty.²⁷³ In other words Sogdian tamghas are the sign of the region irrespective of the ruling dynasty.

Form and application of the tamgha in Sogdian coins

The forms of the Sogdian tamghas, as attested by coin examples known to date, consist of schematic drawings of different shapes, such as a Y-shape with curled limbs, or a lyre-shape with additional limbs. Furthermore, there are also tamghas in geometrical shapes such as triskelions, swastikas and fork-shaped figures.



Figure 20: examples of Sogdian tamghas, reproduced after Smirnova, 1963

As evident from the above examples, tamghas in Sogdian coinage had varied patterns of application, the most common being (on the basis of the available types):

1. A tamgha alone;
2. A tamgha and inscription (legend);
3. A double tamgha, either the same tamgha appearing twice, or two different tamghas.

In the opinion of Naymark, the use of two different tamghas or two similar tamghas in coinage may have resulted when the member of one polity gained power over another, as is exemplified by coinage dating from a time in which the representatives of the Keš principality gained power in Samarqand.²⁷⁴ The coinage of these united, merged ruling

²⁷³ NAYMARK, 2005, pp. 229.

²⁷⁴ NAYMARK, 2005, pp. 228-229.

houses consequently used a double- triskelion and a Y-shape tamgha; one representing the realm of Keš and other the realm of Samarqand.²⁷⁵

Classification

Although there are two major catalogues devoted to Sogdian coins,²⁷⁶ in addition to multiple articles, specimens bearing Christian motifs have only been discussed in a handful of works, notably Smirnova 1957, Musakaeva, 1994 and Naymark, 1996. In addition, enigmatically, some of these coins have not been included in the existing catalogues, such as the Varakhsha coin with animal and cross. Consequently, at present there is no ‘special’ classification table dedicated to Sogdian coins bearing Christian iconography. Smirnova’s first publication provided a limited examination of the examples that were known at the time: namely the Varakhsha and Panjikent specimens. In both her initial publication *О двух группах монет согдийских владетелей VII-VIII вв* (1957) and her famous *Сводный каталог согдийских монет: Бронза* (1981) Smirnova essentially classified these coins as issues of an ‘unknown ruler’.²⁷⁷ Other specimens with a depiction of the cross from Panjikent and Osrušana were included in the *Каталог монет с городища Пенджикент (материалы 1949-1956 гг.)* 1963, but as far as is known, they have not been published separately.

On the other hand, Musakaeva categorized the coins from Bukhara (Bukhara Sogd Group 1 in this dissertation) as a subdivision of the Western Sogdiana copper coinage of 3 BCE - 8 CE.²⁷⁸ Furthermore, based on general iconographic features, she subdivided the group with an animal on the obverse and a ‘Nestorian cross’ on the reverse into types and variants, which according to her “possibly signify the chronological changes” in this coin group.²⁷⁹ However, her identification of the animals depicted on these coins is problematic, as in different publications she has given varying descriptions of the features of the animal depicted on the coins.²⁸⁰ In the original archaeological inventory, the animal depicted on these coins is simply called ‘an animal’ or as Smirnova puts it ‘a fantastic beast.’²⁸¹ The problem of

²⁷⁵ NAYMARK, 2005, pp. 229.

²⁷⁶ SMIRNOVA, 1963 includes Sogdian coins of various types found at Panjikent; SMIRNOVA, 1981 includes coins of both Sogdiana and its adjoining cultural areal, such as Čač, Fergana and Semirechye. Here should be included the recent study by SHAGALOV & KUZNETSOV, 2006 dedicated to the coins of Čač region.

²⁷⁷ SMIRNOVA, 1957, pp.131-132.

²⁷⁸ MUSAKAEVA, 1991.

²⁷⁹ MUSAKAEVA, 1994, 43.

²⁸⁰ NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 182-185 gave a fair criticism of this point of Musakaeva’s research. In my judgment of the sketches and original photos of these coins, however, only seven have the clear depiction of a lion on the obverse, with certain schematic variation; only one has a clear depiction of a deer and the other four have an animal depiction, albeit difficult to distinguish.

²⁸¹ SMIRNOVA, 1957, pp.132.

identifying the animal depicted may have been caused by the coins' physical condition that has not allowed precise and definite examination.

A decade later, Naymark examined the 'Bukhara Sogd Group 1' coins and categorized them as belonging to Vardana, a 'hypothetical Christian principality' at the Bukhara oasis.²⁸² His classification of these coins is governed by "three principal properties":

1. The form of the cross ('thin' or 'thick')
2. The position of the animal (moving left or right)
3. The presence or absence of additional elements (legend, tamgha, dots).²⁸³

With regard to the type of animal depicted on the coins 'Bukhara Sogd Group 1', Naymark concluded that "all known coins from Varakhsha have depictions of lions on the obverse."²⁸⁴ Furthermore, by dismissing Musakaeva's classification by group, type/issue and variants, he opined that, "such classification which describes every object as unique has very little practical application."²⁸⁵ In connection with this it is noteworthy to mention that Naymark, in agreement with Musakaeva, considers that the coins depict two types of the cross (one drawn bigger, another smaller and schematic),²⁸⁶ which he designates respectively as 'thin' and 'thick' crosses.²⁸⁷

The 'Bukhara Sogd Group 1' is also represented by a single specimen deriving from another site at Bukhara oasis- Paykent. This coin, with the reverse side depicting the cross, was published separately by Grigori Semenov in 1996 in the context of the history of Christianity in Central Asia.²⁸⁸ Semenov, in keeping with the general, historical focus of his work, uses this coin as an illustration of the fact that the cross symbol in Central Asia was used in coinage, pointing to the possibility of the ruler responsible for the mint being Christian. He provides no numismatic examination or archaeological background about this specimen.

²⁸² NAYMARK, 1996, pp.12; *ibid*, 2001, pp. 216-219; *ibid*, 2011, pp. 2-3. Naymark's suggestion of the localization of the mint for the coins with Christian motif being from Bukhara Sogd is based purely on an historical argument, especially from the reading of Narshakhi, without any material evidence. However, the archaeological excavation of the Society for the exploration of the Eurasia that commenced in Vardana in 2009 may possibly bring forward some material evidence in support to Naymark's hypothesis in the future. For the latter see: http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/frameset_projekt_0.html (accessed on 25-05-11). Additionally, as Naymark himself expressed in personal conversation, he is not sure if Vardana is the 'Christian principality' after all. (conversation on 22-05-11 at SOAS)

²⁸³ NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 184-185.

²⁸⁴ NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 184. However, considering the condition of the coins, which does not allow one to see the depiction of the animal clearly, as well as the specimen showing a deer; it is possible to suggest that these coins were issued in two series: one with depiction of a lion; another with a deer.

²⁸⁵ NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 184 (footnote).

²⁸⁶ MUSAKAEVA, 1991, pp.15.

²⁸⁷ NAYMARK, 2001, 185.

²⁸⁸ SEMENOV, 1996, pp. 60-61; 140 fig. a.

The second group of coins from Bukhara Sogd with a Christian motif is the so-called ‘Sogdian-Chinese’. Naymark designated them as ‘Chinese-Bukharan’ and ‘Bukharan cash’.²⁸⁹ This coin type was minted in all major mint cities of Sogdiana, including Northern Tukharistan and, until the introduction of the Arabic-Sogdian coins, remained a wide-spread coin type in the Sogdian economy. In their overall design, the ‘Sogdian-Chinese’ coins of Bukhara follow those issued in Samarqand, which are thought to represent the earliest issues in this type, datable from the end of the seventh to the early eighth centuries.²⁹⁰

Naymark identified three types within this coin group deriving from Bukhara:

- A. Type I reproduces the Kai Yuan Tong Bao on the obverse, and the reverse design has the tamgha of Bukhara;
- B. Type II uses the Sogdian legend in parallel lines on the obverse, with the tamgha of Bukhara and the yuán (元) character on the reverse. It displays the equilateral cross with broadened extremities;²⁹¹
- C. Type III has, on the obverse, a Sogdian legend in one line, the tamgha of Bukhara twice and the equilateral cross with broadened extremities; on the reverse, coins in this type are unadorned.²⁹²

²⁸⁹ NAYMARK, 1996, pp. 11-12; *ibid.* 2001, 219.

²⁹⁰ NAYMARK, 1996, pp. 12; SEMENOV, 1996, pp. 61.

²⁹¹ NAYMARK 2001, pp. 224 notes that the coins in *Type II* are smaller in dimension than the coins in *Type I*; however the reason for size difference, and whether the weight is also lower, is not known.

²⁹² NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 219-228 additionally provides details on dimension, weight and readings of the Sogdian legends, which are omitted here.

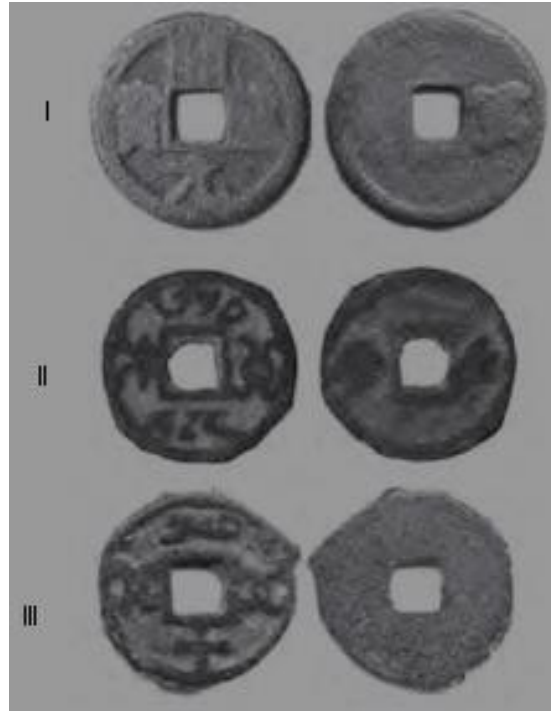


Figure 21: Sogdian-Chinese coin types reproduced after Naymark, 2011

Particularly relevant for this study are the Type II and III, which exhibit the symbol of the cross in their iconography. These two types are henceforth designated as ‘Naymark type II’ and ‘Naymark type III.’

A Concise catalogue of Sogdian coins with *croix patée*

The Sogdian coins displaying Christian iconography in this study are catalogued based on two principles:

1. Iconographic elements. These are use of the cross and other elements such as a tamgha, a legend and an animal.
2. Region of provenance. That is, the region in which the coins were discovered or collected, such as Bukhara Sogd and Samarqand Sogd. Where possible, the exact location in which the coins were found is also mentioned.

The region of the provenance of the coins is used to designate the group, and the iconographic features are used to designate the type. For example, coins from Paykent are designated as ‘Bukhara Sogd group 1’, but further differentiated by the animal depicted on them. Based on this second level of differentiation, a coin bearing the image of a lion, for instance, is designated as ‘type A.’ Additionally, given the fact that in some coins, due to the state of their preservation, the depicted animal cannot be determined for certain; the catalogue below classifies them as a separate type simply designated as ‘animal.’

The aim of this suggested catalogue is only to show the variety of coins based on their iconography and region of provenance. It will not include discussions on the chronological development of coin types or their metrological aspects, which are given in the cited numismatic studies.

a) Bukhara Sogd coins

Bukhara Sogd coins with Christian motifs can be divided into two groups:

1. Group 1: The coins of an unknown ruler with an animal on the obverse and a cross on the reverse.
2. Group 2: The ‘Sogdian-Chinese’; a coin following the Chinese squared-hole design, with the depiction of cross.

The inscription in the coins of the second group reads *pt knđ* or *prn knđ*.²⁹³ In contrast to the second group, the first group of coins has been utilized in most studies on the history of Christianity in Central Asia, including numismatic reports, and has been widely accepted as representing the influence of Christianity.²⁹⁴

The connection between the coins in Group 2 and Christianity was suggested in current scholarship by Naymark.²⁹⁵ His conclusion was based on the iconographic representation of the cross in both coin groups. Furthermore, he opined that both these two coins groups may have been issued by the same ruling house in Bukhara. In particular, he stated that “it was likely that Vardana had been ruled by a Christian dynasty and that Vardan Khuda, who seized control over the entire Bukharan oasis shortly before the Arab conquest and the subsequent Islamisation of Sogdiana, had been Christian.”²⁹⁶

²⁹³ NAYMARK, 1996, pp. 12. According to Naymark, the second reading finds also support in the popular designation of Bukhara as ‘Bukhara-e Sahrif’- ‘Glorious Bukhara’.

²⁹⁴ Beginning with SMIRNOVA, 1957, pp.115-135 this coin group has been mentioned several times, such as in NIKITIN, 1984, pp.121-137; MUSAKAEVA, 1994, pp.42-55; SEMENOV, 1996, pp.57-68 where all the authors interpreted the ‘cross’ as a Christian symbol.

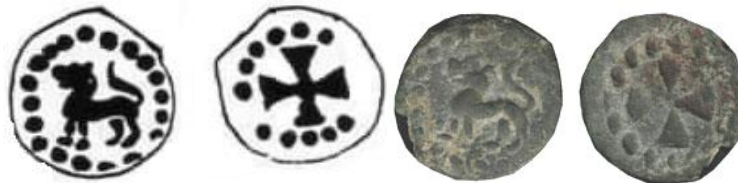
²⁹⁵ NAYMARK, 1996, pp. 11-13; *ibid*, 2001, pp. 219-295; *ibid*, 2011, pp. 2-3.

²⁹⁶ NAYMARK, 2011, pp. 2-3. Apart from the iconographic perspective, establishing the relationship between these two coin groups is difficult. In particular, considering that one coin group (Group 2) has survived in a larger quantity than the other and that both are issues of an unknown ruler makes it very difficult to suggest any absolute solution for the problem. The readings of the Sogdian legends in the second group suggest Paykent as the possible mint place, but they do not mention either the ruler’s name or year. See NAYMARK, 1996, pp. 11-12.

Bukhara Sogd 'Group 1'²⁹⁷

This group consists of the coins with the depiction of an animal in varied positions on the obverse and an equilateral cross with broadened extremities on reverse.²⁹⁸ Based on the animal that is depicted, this group can be further subdivided into the following types:

Type A- Obverse: Lion
Reverse: Cross



Type B- Obverse: Deer
Reverse: Cross



Type C- Obverse: Animal
Reverse: Cross



Coins in this group were partially collected by Vasiliy Shishkin during the archaeological expeditions at Varakhsha in 1950s. To-date, there are more than 15 known specimens in this coin group, which are held in the numismatic room of Samarqand Archaeology Institute and Tashkent state museum in Uzbekistan, as well some in private collections worldwide.²⁹⁹ Other examples were casual finds by Alexander Ivkov, a private coin collector at the Varakhsha site and its environs.³⁰⁰ None of the coins in this group comes from a hoard or were found with other coin collection; therefore the material context for these coins is minimal. According to Naymark “only one lion/cross coin has been found during the actual process of archaeological excavations on Varakhsha.”³⁰¹ As such, deprived of the

²⁹⁷ The drawing of the coins in this group is reproduced after MUSAKAEVA, 1994 and the photo of the coins are reproduced from www.zeno.ru. Oriental Coins Database nos. #20208, #49952 and #30479. These, however are not the same coins; Musakeva's drawings are based on the specimens held in Uzbekistan.

²⁹⁸ The crosses on the coins appear in two different variations. One variation is crosses with broadened arms toward the end, reminiscent of a Greek cross with flared ends. The second variation is also equilateral but it is not depicted as large as in the former.

²⁹⁹ An online coin database, www.zeno.ru, displays many coins. I contacted some of the moderators, and learned that some of these coins are held in Japan or Europe.

³⁰⁰ During my field work, Musakaeva told me that she has identified more coins attributed to the ‘unknown Christian ruler’, however I was not able to examine them and was told that these coins would appear in one of her forthcoming publications.

³⁰¹ NAYMARK, 1996, pp. 11.

archaeological context that would have been immensely helpful for confirming their date, these coins are generally localized based on their find-spot. However, the question of the mint place remains enigmatic; that is, whether they were minted at the actual area of their find or elsewhere cannot be established for certain.³⁰²

Bukhara Sogd ‘Group 2’

This group consists of the coins designated as ‘Sogdian-Chinese.’

Based on their iconographic features, coins in this group are subdivided into the following types (following Naymark):

1. ‘Naymark Type II’- The coins of this group display a Sogdian legend on the obverse in two parallel lines, the *yuán* (元) character and a tamgha, and on the reverse the symbol of the equilateral cross.



Figure 22: ON-V-AZMUZ18007 © The State Hermitage Museum. Drawing reproduced after Naymark, 1996

2. ‘Naymark type III’- The coins in this group display a Sogdian legend on the obverse in one line, two tamghas and a *croix patée*; the reverse of this coin group is unadorned.



Figure 23: Reproduced after Zeymal, 1994, pp. 250 No.15

³⁰² To the best of my knowledge, there has been no suggestion in extant scholarship as to the locality of the mint for the Bukhara coin Group 1. The attempt of Naymark to localize the mint to Vardana has not been supported thus far. See: NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 216-219.

According to Naymark, reporting in 2001, there are about 42 specimens of the ‘Sogdian-Chinese’ coins which derive from the Bukhara oasis, known that are held at museums in Russia and Uzbekistan.³⁰³ However, as the archaeological works in Bukhara are still in progress, the latest exact number of these coins may be larger. The reports of the Paykent excavations of the State Hermitage Museum for the years 2005, 2007, and 2008 documented several new finds of ‘Sogdian-Chinese’ coins representing the above group.³⁰⁴

b) Samarqand Sogd coins

This group is represented by one specimen discovered from the site of Afrāsiāb and four specimens deriving from Panjikent and Osrušana.

The coin was found at the south-eastern part of the Afrāsiāb during the excavation of the large medieval structure (6 meter depth). The obverse of the coin depicts the bust of the ruler and a croix patée placed on the two sides of the bust. One of the crosses has a longer vertical. On the reverse, it has a tamgha and a legend.

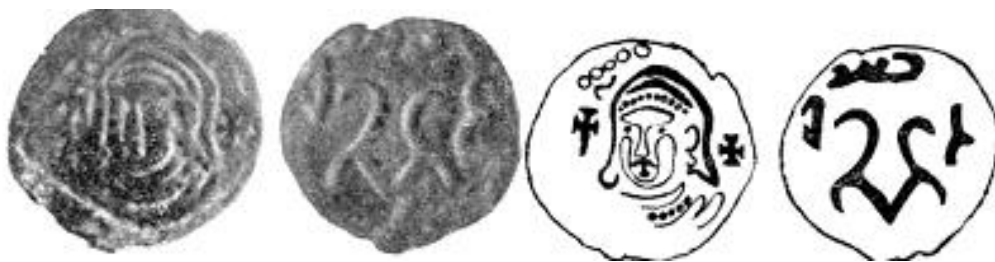


Figure 24: Afrāsiāb coin photo and drawing reproduced after Rtveladze *et al*, 1973

Following its discovery in 1968, the Afrāsiāb coin was published twice in 1973 and 1974, in both cases being discussed within the framework of the influence of Byzantine coinage upon the Central Asian monetary tradition.³⁰⁵ In addition, Edvard Rtveladze *et al.* attempted to connect this coin with a Byzantine ‘prototype’, a coin of the emperor Justinian, but this link was rejected by Naymark who stated that, “the general format of the portrait does not certainly follow the Byzantine tradition.”³⁰⁶ Furthermore, he added that the Justinian coin in which the earlier authors saw the parallel does not depict the emperor’s image in three-quarter view.³⁰⁷ On the other hand, in the Byzantine coinage, a headdress, which is same as

³⁰³ NAYMARK, 1996, pp.12.

³⁰⁴ Excavation report 2005, fig. 14/4a-b; report 2007, fig.92/1, 3; report 2008, fig.103/1-3. The coins examined in this chapter, through the images and actual coins at the numismatic department of the State Hermitage Museum during my fieldwork in August 2011, are those discovered during the archaeological works spanning from the 1950s to 2008.

³⁰⁵ RTVELADZE & TOSHKHOJAEV, 1973, pp.232-234.

³⁰⁶ NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 172.

³⁰⁷ NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 172.

the headdress of the emperor depicted on the Afrāsiāb coin, is found, which could indicate a possible artistic connection.³⁰⁸

The coins found at Panjikent and Osrušana consist of the coins depicting the bust of the ruler on the obverse and the *croix patée* together with the tamgha on the reverse. This group is represented by three specimens of the Afshins of Osrušana (?) as well as one specimen found in Panjikent.³⁰⁹ The repeated findings of these coins in Osrušana, including two hoards, firmly suggests that these coins were minted and circulated there only, thus other finds such as specimen discovered in Panjikent are incidental.³¹⁰ All specimens of this group discussed were previously published by Smirnova.³¹¹



Figure 25: a sample of coins from Osrušana, after Smirnova, 1981

With regard to the latter coins from Osrušana, there are three points to be made:

1. In coins from Osrušana, the names of the rulers, Rakhanch and Satachari as read by Smirnova, are not known from any extant literary sources.
2. The symbol of the cross is not present in all the specimens, but only in type 3 of the Rakhanch.³¹² Out of the five specimens of Rakhanch (*ry'nc*), only two have the symbol of the cross, and only one out of the nine specimens of Satachari.³¹³ In addition, some coins identified as issues of Satachari have an image of the elephant on the obverse; whilst others depict the bust of a king.³¹⁴

³⁰⁸ NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 172.

³⁰⁹ The obverse of one of the Panjikent coins is completely worn. However, judging from close similarities of the iconography on their reverse, I grouped them together as the same specimen.

³¹⁰ SMIRNOVA, 1981, pp.32

³¹¹ SMIRNOVA, 1957, pp.115-135; *ibid*, 1963, *ibid*, 1981.

³¹² For table showing types of coins see SMIRNOVA, 1981, pp.34.

³¹³ compare SMIRNOVA, 1981, pp. 484

³¹⁴ SMIRNOVA, 1981, pp. 484, table xxxvi

3. Some coins in this group bear the Sogdian legend *prnβγγ* and were found in Panjikent. Smirnova has designated the coins with *prnβγγ* legend as a ‘temple coins’ i.e. coins that were issued by a temple.³¹⁵

Smirnova’s postulation is solely based on her interpretation of the legend *prnβγγ* that possibly indicates that these coins were issued by a temple dedicated to Farnbag, who was either a deity worshiped in Samarqand Sogd or whose temple existed there. However, this suggestion of the existence of a ‘temple culture’ issuing its own coinage in Sogdiana cannot be firmly supported.³¹⁶ However, one may also consider that these coins are of two separate issues/types and may well represent coins of pre and post-conversion (?) of the ruler.

The Cross in the iconography of Sogdian coins and its function

In his assessment of the symbolism of the cross in the Central Asian religious field, Hans Joachim Klimkeit remarked that “wir [haben] es hier mit einem zentralen Symbol von Leben und Tod zu tun.”³¹⁷ As such, the use of the iconography of the cross in art and other material culture objects cannot be restricted to Christianity alone; notably it is known in Manichean art as well.³¹⁸ Nevertheless, based on historical examples demonstrating the use of the cross in

³¹⁵ SMIRNOVA, 1981, pp. 24-25. It is of interest to note that in Sogdian, the personal name constituted from *prn* and *βγγ* is *βγγprn*. For discussion of this including bibliography reference see LIVSHITS, 2007, pp. 177. It is also of interest to note that this name i.e. *βγγprn* is also attested by a stamp found in Qarshovul site at Tashkent region for which see: SAVCHENKO, 2012, Archaeological investigations at the site of Qarshovul May-June 2012, available at http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/frameset_projekt_7.html (accessed on 13/01/2014)

³¹⁶ The problem of interpretation of the coins with the *prnβγγ* legend is similar to another group of coins from Panjikent. This particular type has inscription *pncy nnδβ'm(-)pnH*; *pncy nn(δ)-βnpnwH* ‘Nanaia, the lady of Panch’ (SMIRNOVA, 1981, nos. 758-996, pp. 233-255, Table XXV-XXVIII). As LURJE, 2010, pp. 269 points out “HENN., *S God*, p. 252, n. 67, 68, compared the legend with *nnδβ'mbn* “Nana the Lady” in *Magi*, p. 143, 20, and considered that Δēwāštīč issued his coins in the name of the most popular divinity. O.I. SMIRNOVA in various publications considered different explanations of the coin, such as monetary issues of Panjakent Nanaia temple (1967, p. 34-36) or the name of a queen (even two queens!) of Panjakent (*Sv. Kat.*, p. 48 ff.). LIV., *Praviteli Pancha*, p. 64-65, thinks that these coins were issued by Δēwāštīč (stratigraphically, these coins belong to his time, early 8th century), but in the name of his (chief) wife, whose name was *Nana*; so he translates the legend as “Nana, the Ruler of Panch”. Note that *nnδβ'mbn* in the MS text can also be a term used for a kind of priest(ess).” If to accept the argument that certain coin types in Sogdiana were issued by temples of certain deities e.g. Far or Nana then what was the function of these coins i.e. were these coins meant to be used for ritualistic purpose in the temple (e.g. used for the purchase of a sacrifice items) or were they a regular currency. In addition, one has to be established whether such practice was common in other cultures where Zoroastrianism was practiced, such as in Iran. Professor Michael Alram, Director of the Coin Cabinet of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, has communicated with me that such a tradition, i.e. temples issuing coins, never existed within the Iranian religious culture, and that there is no record of coins being issued by temples at all. (Personal communication by email, 02-06-11)

³¹⁷ KLIMKEIT, 1979, pp. 99-100.

³¹⁸ The depiction of the croix patée in the material cultural objects of ancient Mesopotamia is understood to represent the solar symbol. One of the earliest depictions of the equilateral cross with broadening extremities is attested in the cylindrical seals of the Djemdet Nasr period of ancient Mesopotamia. (FASANI, 1983, pp. 381; table 668) The depiction of this form of cross that is croix patée is also known from the Assurnasirpal II stele, where the equilateral cross with broadening extremities appears encircled in the disk with thin rays of equal length in between angels. (SETON-WILLIAMS, 1981, pp.144-145, Abb. 102) The ancient Mesopotamian

‘Christian material culture’ this dissertation accepts the representation of the cross (*croix patée*) on coins as a Christian symbol.

The function of the cross on Sogdian coins

The appearance of the *croix patée* on Sogdian coinage coincided with the emergence of the usage of the tamgha that was a characteristic of the monetary iconography of Sogdiana in the fifth-ninth centuries.³¹⁹

In the coins examined in this dissertation, four patterns of the application of the *croix patée* emerge:

1. Cross used alone;
2. Cross used in combination with other elements, such as a tamgha and a legend, and in the case of the Sogdian-Chinese coins, in combination with the *yuán* (元) character;
3. Cross used only on the obverse;
4. Cross used only on the reverse.

The application pattern of the cross in Sogdian coins is comparable to that of a tamgha. The use of both these iconographic elements, i.e. *croix patée* and tamgha, does not follow any specific rule; that is to say that they may only feature on the obverse, or alternatively only on the reverse of the coins. The available coin samples demonstrate their random application; that is, on either side of the coins and in different positions.

In 1957, when Smirnova first published Sogdian coins bearing the *croix patée* in their iconography, she stated that “in this coin the cross is inserted as an additional (secondary) emblem to the dynastic sign [tamgha] of the Sogdian ruler.”³²⁰ Subsequently, this view of the function of the cross as a secondary emblem has become widely accepted, even though the function of this ‘additional’ or ‘secondary’ emblem, and the manner in which it should be understood within the context of Sogdian monetary iconography still remains unexplored.

Most recently, Naymark, based on the definition of the semantics of the symbol of cross, and comparing the usage pattern of the cross with that of a tamgha (whether the cross is used in obverse or reverse, alone or with additional sign) has postulated four possible interpretations regarding the function of the cross in the Bukhara Sogd coins:

- 1) The cross functioning as a tamgha, but not originating from tamghas as iconography;

depiction of an equilateral cross with broadening extremities is understood to represent the astral deities, such as Hadad the storm god. (FASANI, 1983, pp. 381; table 668; SETON-WILLIAMS, 1981, pp.144-145).

³¹⁹ The use of the tamgha in this period, however, was not limited to Sogdian coins alone, but is also attested in coins from Tukharistan and Semirechye.

³²⁰ SMIRNOVA, 1957, pp. 132. About two decades later she made a similar statement in regard to the coins of Osrušana; see: SMIRNOVA, 1981, pp. 17.

- 2) The cross functioning as a Christian symbol comparable to the iconography of the cross found in other objects of material culture in Sogdiana and the Central Asian region;
- 3) The cross representing combined semantic aspects of both a tamgha (standing for the dynastic or regional badge) and a religious symbol;
- 4) The cross in combination with the tamgha of Bukhara representing the tamgha of the original realm or 'dynasty' of the ruler responsible for the mint, with the tamgha of Bukhara indicating his claim of control over Bukhara.³²¹

Notably, Naymark, discussing the function and semantics of the *croix patée* in Bukhara Sogd coins has suggested that it possibly represented the tamgha of Vardana, an independent polity in the Bukhara oasis whose ruler may have been also responsible for the mint of the Sogdian-Chinese coins.³²²

Naymark's identification of the *croix patée* as a tamgha can be justified on the basis of the application of tamgha and *croix patée*. However, in view of the fact that all the Sogdian coins are consistent in their use of the regional tamghas and also in the wider context of the application of *croix patée* in coin iconography, his suggestion that the cross was possibly the tamgha of a certain geopolitical realm is difficult to verify. The situation is compounded further by the absence of direct textual sources validating these particular coins having been issued by a certain dynasty or polity. Nevertheless, the numismatic evidence and archaeological context, as well as existing comparable examples from other locations, allow the following deductions:

1. The Sogdian rulers adopted the use of the *croix patée* in the same way that the tamgha was used, because in that period the tamgha was widely practiced and understood as an element of the monetary iconography. It is possible, however, that semantically the *croix patée* may not have been perceived as a tamgha *per se*, but rather as the 'personal emblem' of the individual ruler, relating to his Christian faith or his favour towards Christianity and his Christian subjects. If this were the case, the cross might have represented the religious affinity of the individual ruler responsible for the mint over and above its being necessarily related to the heraldic system of his realm. This however, does not necessarily mean that it was used in a personal context, but rather that it was also understood in the wider social context in which these coins were used, such as daily trade in local markets.

³²¹ NAYMARK, 1996, pp. 11-12; *ibid*, 2001, pp. 242-255.

³²² NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 295; *ibid*, 2011, pp. 3.

2. The perception of the *croix patée* on coinage as a personal emblem can be paralleled by the use of this symbol in seals, in particular those from the Sassanid period. Most of the known seals are decorated with crosses, inscriptions (personal names or phrases in Pahlavi) and episodes from Old Testament episodes, like the ‘sacrifice of Isaac’ or ‘Daniel in the lion’s den.’³²³ These seals were made for personal use; however, they functioned in ‘public’, in that the sealed documents were circulated or used in a wider social context than just the personal sphere. Accordingly, they were instrumental in the creation of a ‘public’ symbol of the ‘personal faith’ in that seals publically (both as objects and as imprints in documents) represented the personal worldviews or religious affinity of their owners. What is also apparent is that the symbols on these seals cannot be attached to a certain place or certain polity, but only to their owners; especially if they bear personal names.³²⁴ From the numismatic perspective, the use of the *croix patée* as a ‘personal emblem’ is also attested by the Sassanid coins issued in Marv and in Alexandria. In both these examples, the *croix patée* can be understood neither as the symbol of the Sassanid Dynasty nor of Marv or Alexandria, but as the personal religious emblem of the individual regional rulers responsible for their mint. It is noteworthy that examples of neither group have been found anywhere else in the territory of the Sassanid Empire.³²⁵
3. Given the geographical proximity of the Bukhara Sogd and Marv, the abovementioned evidence points to the fact that the use of *croix patée* in Sogdian coins may have been borrowed to function as a ‘personal emblem’. This would also imply that the direct influence of the use of *croix patée* in Sogdiana came from Iran rather than Byzantium. This supposition finds support in the material evidence as well as from historical arguments, in particular the cultural and economic relationship between Sogdiana and Iran, which predates that between Sogdiana and Byzantium.
4. As mentioned Naymark proposed that the Bukhara Sogd Group 1 coins are from not later than 7-8 centuries CE.³²⁶ However, if the suggestion that the borrowing was

³²³ The detailed discussion of these two and other related biblical themes is found in LERNER, 2007, pp.39-57; *ibid*, 2009, pp.653-664.

³²⁴ The literature on Sassanian seals, especially those with Christian symbolism, is vast; however some prominent examples are CHABOUILLET, 1858, p. 191 (fig. 1330-1332); BORISOV 1939, pp. 235-242; BIVAR 1969, pp. 29-29; LERNER, 1977; GYSELEN 2006, pp. 17-78.

³²⁵ For discussion of the role of the coin as mean of the political and religious propaganda, see CURTIS, 2007, pp. 413-434.

³²⁶ The dates for the coins are assigned on the basis of comparative examination of the various coin types known in Sogdiana and in these specific regions where the coins were found. For discussion see NAYMARK, 1996, pp.11-13.

made from the Yazdgard I (399-420 CE) coins issued in Marv, one may also suggest that these coins were issued at least a century earlier than seventh century, if not contemporaneous with their ‘prototypes’. Accordingly the tentative chronology suggested by Musakaeva that these coins were possibly issued between the fourth and sixth centuries maybe regarded a plausible claim.³²⁷ The chronology of these coins is established mainly on iconographic grounds. What this then suggests is that the introduction of monetary expression of Christianity in Sogdiana preceded its other material expression, which required more time to evolve. This suggestion perhaps is best supported by the fact that some authors indicated the establishment of the metropolitinate of Samarqand in the early fifth century.

Views on the iconography of the cross in Sogdian coins

Opinions vary as to the interpretation of the sign of the *croix patée* in Sogdian coins as a Christian symbol. Some scholars have considered the cross symbol to be form of a tamgha void of any particular religious connotation, whilst others recognized it as a cross symbol, but without Christian association. Thus, Naymark opined that “the crosses on the Afrāsiāb specimen may simply be a rudiment of the prototype image that does not necessarily reflect the religious affiliation of the ruler.”³²⁸ In other words, in this particular coin, the cross is the remnant of the original design copied, without any attachment to its Christian origin and semantics, just as it appeared in Byzantine coinage. Elsewhere, Naymark expressed similar views about the cross symbol used in some coins of Čač and Panjikent. In particular, he argued that “judging from their small size [these crosses] did not carry the same meaning as the large tamgha signs which formed the focal point of the reverse design. [The cross symbol] at least visually plays the role of a subsidiary element, only complement[ing] the large tamgha. Although the meaning of such a ‘secondary’ sign is not clear, it is more than plausible that they have no relation to [the] main symbol of Christianity- there is nothing specifically Christian in their shape.”³²⁹

Discussing the appearance of the *croix patée* in Sogdian-Chinese coins, both Shishkin and Smirnova have suggested that the cross-shaped sign in these coins represent the Chinese character *shí* 十 standing for ‘10’.³³⁰ Francois Thierry, in his examination of the coins of this type housed at the Cabinet des médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, opined that, “Il

³²⁷ MUSAKAEVA, 1991, pp. 15.

³²⁸ NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 176.

³²⁹ NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 177.

³³⁰ SHISHKINA, 1963, pp. 105; SMIRNOVA, 1981, pp. 65.

nous semble difficile d'interpréter cette croix.³³¹ Further, remarking on Zeymal's interpretation of this sign as a tamgha he adds, "on pourrait tout aussi bien penser au caractère chinois shí十"10".³³² Consequently it is hard to determine his position with regards to the semantics and function of the cross on 'Sogdian-Chinese' coins, whether it is a tamgha or the character shí十.³³³

The difficulty with the interpretation of the semantics of the cross as character shí十 is that the Sogdian-Chinese coin owes its design and iconography to the Kai Yuan Tong Bao 开元通宝, which originated in China around the 620/1 CE, and the character shí十 was never part of its original design.³³⁴ The character shí十 in Chinese coins, most likely as a mark of value, is attested in the Wang Mang coins and, as evidenced in the images below, is very different in its iconography to the symbol used in Sogdian coins.



Figure 26: Wang Mang coin, Chand Collection ©The Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge³³⁵

The crosses depicted on Sogdian coins have broadening extremities, which is unique to the *croix patée* known in Christian iconography of the Central Asian region, whereas the character shí十 of Chinese coins is composed of two plain crossing lines only. Consequently, the rather elaborate shape of the cross on the Sogdian-Chinese coins of Bukhara, supported by the established iconography of the character shí十 (which is very different) upholds its interpretation as the *croix patée*, and not the character shí十.

³³¹ THIERRY, 1997, pp. 147.

³³² THIERRY, 1997, pp. 147.

³³³ It is worth noting that in some cases where the coins of the abovementioned type have been mentioned, no comment on the iconography of the cross was made at all, as for example the Paykent archaeological reports. See Report on Paykent excavation, 2004, fig 14/nos. 4a-b; Report on Paykent excavation 2006, pp. 38, and 144/nos. three; Report on Paykent excavation, 2007, pp. 126/nos.1-3. A similar case is ZEYMAL, 1996, pp. 358-380.

³³⁴ THIERRY, 1998, pp. 26-29, particularly considering the fact of the continual use of this Chinese coinage that preserved its design down to the 19th century.

³³⁵ Available through the online catalogue of the museum at the following link: <http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/support/friends/opac/cataloguedetail.html?&preref=170880&function=xslt&limit=100#1> (accessed in 27-01-2013).

The problem of the mint place and the mint owner

Sogdian coins bearing Christian motifs have been widely mentioned in various numismatic works dealing with the history of Christianity in Central Asia.³³⁶ In all available studies they are generally acknowledged to be indicative of the presence of Christianity expressed through the symbolism of the cross on coinage. However, a major problem related to these coins is the question of their mint place and mint owner. That is, where and by whom were these coins issued? In discussing these issues, this section engages with the two most intriguing suggestions made thus far regarding the mint place and mint owner of these coins.

In the initial publication of the first specimens of Sogdian coins with the Christian motifs, Smirnova remarked that “The Sogdian inscription on the Panjikent coin leaves no doubt that it was issued by Sogdians, perhaps not by a prince, but the head of the Christian community or monastery.”³³⁷ This statement is both positive and problematic at the same time; especially the second half of the statement that identifies the mint owner as ‘the head of the Christian community or monastery.’ Although this conclusion would be plausible in regard to the western monastic tradition that flourished in different social-political conditions, as far as is known, there was no tradition of issuing coins by eastern monastic institutions.³³⁸

Naymark, in his extensive studies on the Bukhara coins, suggested that the Bukhara Sogd Group 1 was the “coinage of some independent realm that existed in the Bukharan oasis contemporaneous to the kingdom of Bukhara itself.”³³⁹ In particular, on the basis of the Narshakhi’s history, he suggested that the Bukhara Sogd Group 1 was likely minted at Vardana³⁴⁰ and that the Bukhara Sogd Group 2 coins were also possibly minted by the representative of the same dynasty who ruled the independent realm of Vardana.³⁴¹ Naymark

³³⁶ For example NIKITIN, 1984, pp. 121-137; MUSAKAEVA, 1994, pp. 42-55.

³³⁷ SMIRNOVA, 1957, pp. 133.

³³⁸ There was usually a parcel of rights e.g. to mint coins, to hold markets and etc, which formed part of the policy of the emperors in the West during the Middle Ages to utilize ecclesiastical institutions as part of their rule. One possible example could be that in Merovingian France and Anglo-Saxon England some coins were issued by monasteries, though this is not certain. Coins were definitely issued by some religious houses in the German empire during the rule of the Ottonian house; selected male and female religious houses in Germany and the Low Countries were given minting rights by emperors, just as bishops and archbishops were. Generally, the heads of the monasteries or abbeys did not succeed in creating territorial states with extensive currencies in the way that many bishops did, however many of the monastic orders retained their coinage rights until the end of the Holy Roman empire in the early 19th century. About the functionality of the ‘monastic’ coins, it can only be assumed that it depended a lot on the period and local context. Nevertheless, these coins were certainly intended to be actual, usable money in the medieval period. Some of the monasteries that held the mint right, mostly male monasteries, in France functioned until the 12th or 13th centuries. (COOK B.J, Curator of Medieval and Early Modern Coinage, Department of Coins and Medals, British Museum. (Personal communication by email 09-05-2011).)

³³⁹ NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 203-204.

³⁴⁰ NAYMARK, 1996, pp. 11-13; *ibid*, 2001, pp. 203-204.

³⁴¹ NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 290.

has identified the Bukhara Sogd Group 2 coins as coins of Khunak the Vardan Khudah, the ruler of Vardana.³⁴²

This suggestion hypothetically solves Smirnova's misinterpretation of the coins bearing the Christian motifs as being issued by 'the head of the Christian community or monastery.' However, it is also problematic, in view of the paucity of material evidence, including literary sources, confirming the role and place of Vardana in the development of 'Sogdian Christianity', especially the role of Khunak the Vardan Khudah as the possible Christian ruler. Of the Sogdian coins bearing Christian motifs, only the names of two rulers - Rakhanch and Satachari - are known.³⁴³ In addition to casual finds, two hoards of the coins of these two rulers were discovered at Shahrستان and at Osrušana, in archaeological strata of the sixth-seventh century.³⁴⁴

Sogdian coins and 'Sogdian Christianity'

The relationship of the above-described coins to Christianity rests primarily on the evidence of monetary iconography and particularly the use of the *croix patée*. However, the interpretation of these coins as valid historical evidence contributing to our understanding of the social status and representation of Christianity in Sogdiana is achieved through consideration of the function of coins in economic and social contexts. Two possible suggestions can be offered about the contribution of these coins in this matter, these being given through two 'coin metaphors.'³⁴⁵

Coins are history - Coins create history

An early metaphorical recognition of coins as history in European numismatics is exemplified by the work of humanist Giovanni Matociis of Verona. Otherwise known as Giovanni Mansionario, his *Historia Imperialis*, written between 1313 and 1320, is decorated by the obverse images on the Roman coins, which are the portraits of the emperors mentioned.³⁴⁶ However, the understanding and use of coins directly as history becomes clearer in the works of Italian Renaissance poet and scholar Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374 CE). He viewed the Roman imperial coins as providing the contemporary portraits of Roman

³⁴² NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 290.

³⁴³ Coins indicated in SMIRNOVA, 1963, pp. 130-132.

³⁴⁴ SMIRNOVA, 1981, pp. 32; NEGMATOV, 1967.

³⁴⁵ On examination of the coinage through the metaphors see CRIBB, 2005, pp. 417-438, *ibid*, 2006, pp. 494-516, *ibid*, 2007a, pp. 361-395, *ibid*, 2009, pp.461-529. However, the metaphorical exploration as mode of analysis is also applicable to other material culture objects (archaeological evidence) for which see TILLEY, 1999.

³⁴⁶ WEISS 1968, pp. 177.

emperors.³⁴⁷ As such, Petrarch interpreted coins as direct evidence of the past emperors' noble qualities. Prompted by such understating, he even presented a collection of ancient Roman coins to the Emperor Charles IV, encouraging him to follow their example.³⁴⁸

In a similar way, the Sogdian coins that were issued in the seventh-eighth centuries are direct evidence of history. Unlike the Roman emperors, there is no historical record of the rulers who commissioned the issue of the coins discussed in this chapter. However, their topography and normative monetary characteristics, such as weight, metal and size, in relation to Sogdian monetary tradition, places them uniquely as an integral part and product of Sogdian social history. Their design, iconography and ornaments represent historically significant meanings, and were chosen carefully by the commissioning party responsible for the mint. For example, the Sogdian-Chinese coins, which follow the design of the coin of the Tang dynasty, speak of the political-economic relationships between Tang China and Sogdiana. The subsequent changes made in Sogdiana to the original Tang design demonstrate its integration within the Sogdian economic-cultural milieu.

Coins convey a message

Cribb observes that the coin designs in most monetary traditions “indicate the state’s monetary authority which produced and issued them.”³⁴⁹ The royal image and the ruler’s name and other forms of representation indicated the state’s monetary authority. Images of authority, such as the depiction of an emperor, or other symbols of power, such as heraldic emblems, always stood as meaningful representations of the kingdom, while the reverse depicted the ‘secondary’ royal or religious symbol (or a combination of both semantics). Coins were the best means to convey political and religious messages.

“The monetary role enabled the coin to function properly as a coin, ensuring that it circulated smoothly and without interruption. The political role of the coin manifested in the way the widespread use of coinage enabled a regime or state to impose its authority in all of the monetary transactions which take place in any society”³⁵⁰

In this context, the political and economic message of Sogdian coins under discussion is represented both by the royal image (specimens from Samarqand Sogd) and the regional tamgha, which points to the region in which it was minted or the authority of the regional state it represented.

³⁴⁷ WEISS 1968; CUNNALLY 1999, pp. 34–6.

³⁴⁸ WEIS, 1968, pp. 177; CUNNALLY 1999, pp. 34–6; BABELON 2004, p. 61.

³⁴⁹ CRIBB, 2009, pp. 498–499.

³⁵⁰ BURNETT, 1991, pp. 29.

On the other hand, the retention of the Chinese *yuán* (元) character in Sogdian-Chinese coins may have been for economic reasons. That is, the character may have served to facilitate smooth circulation between Sogdian and Chinese traders. It may be also said that certain monetary iconographies, such as a tamgha, cross, or in this particular case, the Chinese *yuán* (元) character, functioned as recognizable marks of value. In other words, the ordinary populace associated the images used on coins with their value.

The religious message of coins is observed in almost every monetary tradition, particularly those related to the Sogdian monetary tradition, such as the Kušan and Sassanian traditions. The religious message in Kušan coinage is represented by both the images of deities and various inscriptions. When examining the Shiva-like image in Kušan coins, Cribb stated that it “shows the devotion of the Kushan kings” and that “the [coin] designs appear to be [a] clear statement that the king worships the god and that the god gives authority to the king.”³⁵¹ The religious message of Sassanian coins is dominated by Zoroastrian iconographic motifs. Vesta Curtis observes that the crown worn by early Sassanid kings, such as Ardashir I (224-241 CE) and his son Shapur I (241-272 CE), as depicted in iconography, is identical with the crown of Hormizd, a chief god of the Zoroastrian religion, also known from rock reliefs of that time.³⁵² In the same manner that the fire altar and throne represent the unity of political power and religion; so the appearance of the crown alongside religious iconography represents the unity of the ruler and his deity. The presence of the religious iconography, represented by the fire altar and the images of deities, also speaks of the attempt to legitimise the power of the king. According to Zoroastrian doctrine, kingship must be validated by the gods and the king must possess *khvarah*, a god-given fortune that makes him a good king. In this way the iconography of religious symbolism also takes a political overtone, which, according to Curtis, signifies both the political message and religious symbolism.³⁵³

Studies of religious iconography in Sassanian and Kušan coins demonstrate that it represented the ruler’s attachment to a particular religion. Religious iconography either depicted the person of the deity, who legitimized the rule of the king, or religious artefacts, such as the fire altar, that represented the gods on earth. The representations of religious iconography would have been those familiar to the people and the ruling power alike. People would have recognized the imaginary and symbolism in coins they used as much as the ruler who issued them.

³⁵¹ CRIBB, 1997, pp. 40, 27.

³⁵² CURTIS, 2007, pp. 426.

³⁵³ CURTIS, 2007, pp.413.

The use of a tamgha and a legend in the Sogdian coins can be paralleled in the embellishment of the cross with ribbons in Sassanian coins.³⁵⁴ This iconographic feature conveys Christian symbolism engrafted into the Sassanid (Zoroastrian) culture, where the use of ribbons can be understood as an honorific-religious device. Accordingly, the use of the cross in combination with the Sogdian tamgha and Sogdian inscription indicates the localization of the ‘cross’ into Sogdian culture, where local Christian rulers adopted it to replace Zoroastrian iconography. Lerner notes that the adoption of the cross and of other Christian iconography by Persian Christians in glyptic and seals may have been inspired by the ‘western’ traditions, in particular Constantinople, with the influence from Syria and Egypt exhibited in dress and cross forms.³⁵⁵ However, “these have been adapted to the pervasive Sassanian conventions of form and style”,³⁵⁶ in other words these ‘borrowed’ elements were indigenised in their representation. Furthermore, as Shaul Shaked observed:

“when crosses are used on monuments of glyptic art, which are private in character and where they do not continue any local artistic tradition, there is some presumption in favour of regarding them as indicating the personal religious inclination of their owners. The existence of a substantial Christian minority, and of the powerful Byzantine empire, must have made non-Christians realise that this was not a symbol to be used in a mere decorative manner.”³⁵⁷

In light of the above, the following can be deduced from the iconographic elements of the coins discussed:

1. The tamghas act as primary identification marks pointing to the possible mint or circulation area of the coins. The tamgha was one of the dominant iconographic elements in Sogdian coinage starting from the 5th century, and in different regions of Sogdiana there were different tamghas used.
2. The use of a Sogdian legend indicates the indigenous character of the coins. The inscriptions in coinage were often of an administrative character, indicating the place

³⁵⁴ LOGINOV & NIKITIN, 1993, pp.247, 272. In Sassanid coins issued in Marv, ribbons are also present in the reverse types of the coins of Shapur II (309-379 CE), Shapur III and Varahran IV. There are 5 reverse types known for the coins of Shapur II issued in Marv; one of these reverse types show the fire altar with ribbon tied round it and its ends hanging by the sides of the altar. Among the bronze coins of Shapur II there is one new reverse type showing a diadem or wreath with dangling ribbons, which is not known in the coins issued before this. The reverse type of the Varahran IV bronze coins show “an almond-shaped leaf or bud with two ribbons rising from its slip by the sides.” In the Sassanid coins from Marv, the ribbons appear with either religious or political/royal symbols (Shapur II shows fire altar, Shapur III shows diadem). It is possible to say that ribbons here function as a cosmological Zoroastrian devise, perhaps representing *khvarah*.

³⁵⁵ LERNER, 1977, pp. 28-29.

³⁵⁶ LERNER, 1977, pp. 29.

³⁵⁷ SHAKED, 1977, pp. 20-21.

of the mint and or name of the ruler. However, language is also symbol of national identity and representative of local culture. Although the legends on the coins discussed above supply very little information, they at least symbolically represent their ‘administrative authority’, namely the Sogdian state that minted them for its local and external economic needs.³⁵⁸

3. The retention of the *yuán* (元) character in the Sogdian-Chinese coins clearly reveals their lineage from the Tang Dynasty’s inaugural cash. However, considering the change of the original coin design, i.e., the insertion of tamghas and Sogdian legends, leads to the assumption that the retention of the *yuán* (元) character was intentional. This character in Sogdiana did not function in the same manner as it did in the Chinese monetary context, but rather was used as mark of value. The Sogdian mint owner had to produce a coin that could readily become currency for exchange in both local and external markets, and retaining an ‘external’ iconography added value to the coin. As Cribb notes “for money to continue to circulate it has to have some resemblance to pre-existing forms of money.”³⁵⁹
4. The *croix patée*, in the known context from which Sogdian coinage drew inspiration, i.e., Sassanid coins, seals, and Byzantine coins, functioned as a religious symbol.³⁶⁰ In relation to the concept of ‘coin conveys a message’, the use of this symbol points to the religious dimension of their message. Beyond their primary role as currency, the coins functioned as a means of state and religious propaganda. In this way, the iconography and motifs represent the view and intention of the ruler responsible for the mint.

Conclusion

The above discussed Sogdian coins represent an important segment of Sogdian numismatic as well as social history. Their typology, design and monetary iconography represent the change and developments that were occurring in Sogdiana in the time of their mint and circulation.

In particular, from the iconographic perspective, these coins indicate that during the seventh-eighth centuries (when these coins were issued and were in circulation) Christianity within

³⁵⁸ The Turgesh coins of Semirechye that use Sogdian inscriptions are of a different category.

³⁵⁹ CRIBB, 2009, pp. 498-499.

³⁶⁰ HEIDEMANN, 2010, pp. 25-26 pointed out that the cross in some gold denominations of Byzantium was used to distinguish their value and type. “The symbol of the Byzantine *nomisma* was the cross potent on a stepped platform. The symbol for the Byzantine *semissis* was the cross potent on a globe. The symbol for the Byzantine *tremissis* was a cross potent frequently surrounded by a wreath or a circular inscription. The *semisses* and *tremissis* needed distinguishing marks because of their small weight difference.”

Sogdiana was socially integrated. Coins decorated with the unambiguously Christian symbol of the cross were used publicly in administrative and economic transactions (paying tax, purchasing good, paying for certain services) along with other Sogdian coins bearing conventional Sogdian or Zoroastrian iconographies.

The rulers of Sogdiana used the *croix patée* in their coins, and this conventional symbolism seems to have been socio-culturally understood. There are reason to believe that the iconography was borrowed or used in a pattern imitating the Yazdgard I coins that were minted in Marv, which was not only a major garrison city of the Sassanid Empire, but also an important missionary outpost of the Church of the East in Khorasan and beyond. Although, the borrowing of the iconography from other means, such as seals or coins of other series, particularly silver drachms, is also possible.

The survival and existence of these coins, considering that they were used for daily commercial transactions by the populace, testifies that those who used them understood both the face value of these coins and what they represented. In other words, the fact that the cross, as an iconic representation of Christianity, was culturally known, and that coins bearing its image functioned as money (coinage), is remarkable because it suggests that the alteration in coin iconography was not perceived to make them less valuable. The monetary iconography in these coins was recognized as legitimate design with appropriate meaning and function.

The Sogdian coins bearing Christian motifs, as objects of material culture, represent particular historical environments and communicate specific socio-political messages that convey, in the words of Ian Hodder, *function, structure and content*.³⁶¹ Issued to function as currency, these coins demonstrate the ability to represent the history of which they were part. They structure the different relationships that surround them, such as local or distant trade or as the official coinage of a certain state; thus they represent power. The content of these coins is comprised of various sets of information, such as inscriptions and symbols. Each of these elements has a different attribution: political, economic, personal or communal. As currency, they were officially produced; hence, they represent the intentions and attitudes of the ‘agency’ that produced them.

Whilst this monetary representation of Christianity does not imply that Christianity had achieved an ubiquitous, widespread ‘state-religion’ status in Sogdiana, what it does indicate is that neither was it marginalized, but was functioning fully within the established socio-

³⁶¹ HODDER, 1987, pp. 1.

economic fabric of the society. It was perhaps in this context that the rulers of Sogdiana found it appropriate to use the *croix patée* on their coins to convey their religious affiliation. As in any other society, coinage was a major point of contact between the rulers and their subjects, coins being not merely monetary objects, but also symbolic representations of power and authority. Individuals might never enter into royal presence, or even have seen their ruler ‘alive’, yet at some point, many Sogdians probably held or saw coins bearing the tamgha of the realm, the name or portrait of the ruler. It is in this sense that the coins informed the populace of their ruler and his faith.

CHAPTER THREE: ‘SOGDIAN CHRISTIANITY’: ARCHITECTURE AND MATERIAL CULTURE EVIDENCE

Introduction

In addition to the numismatic material discussed in the previous chapter, a significant presence and influence of Christianity in Sogdiana is also attested by other types of material culture products.

This chapter discusses two categories of material evidence:

1. Architectural evidence: this includes the recently excavated church ruin in the Urgut region, 30 km south of Samarqand. This is referred as the ‘Urgut Church,’ relating to the location of excavation.

2. Small material culture objects: a wide spectrum of objects with personal or communal devotional characteristics, such as pendant crosses and incense burners or other general objects like lanterns or ceramic tiles with crosses inscribed.

In the absence of historical texts on the advance of Christianity into Sogdiana, this material evidence is extremely valuable, since it represents a direct local Sogdian image of Christianity as an inherently integrated religion. In other words, this material evidence represents the fact that Christianity in Sogdiana had an established and visible presence over several centuries. Accordingly, through its testimony, a comment can be offered on whether Christianity in Sogdiana remained an imported religion or whether it had a genuine local expression, represented in local material culture.

Medieval attestations of ‘Christian architecture’ in Sogdiana and the current archaeological situation

Several medieval sources inform us of ‘Christian architecture’ in Sogdiana; that is to say, the existence and functioning of either a church or monastery building. In particular, within the period covered in this dissertation (5th – 9th centuries) there are two main medieval historical attestations about Christian architecture in Sogdiana.

1. *Šūrat al-’Arḍ* by Abu al-Qasim Ibn Hawqal, a tenth century Arab geographer, reports: “Al- Sāwdār is a mountain to the south of Samarkand... On Sāwdār [there is] a monastery of the Christians where they gather and have their cells. I found many Iraqi Christians there who migrated to the place because of its suitability, solitary location and healthiness. It has inalienable properties (*wuqūf*), and many Christians retreat to it; this place towers over the major part of Sogd and is known as Wazkird.”³⁶²

In 1894 Barthold made the first attempt to locate the abovementioned ‘monastery of Christians’.³⁶³ He suggested that Sāwdār as mentioned by Ibn Hawqal was possibly a mountain range directly south of Samarqand surrounding the towns of Qara-teppa and Urgut, in the modern day Urgut region. Vasily Viatkin, some years later, identified the Wazkird mentioned in Ibn Hawqal’s text with the town called Wīzd recorded in the *waqf*

³⁶²English translation reproduced after SAVCHENKO, 1996, p. 333. A French translation of this passage is cited in KRAMERS & WIET, 1964, p. 478. SAVCHENKO & DICKENS, 2009, pp. 126-127 also provided a slightly different translation of this passage. A similar reference to Šāwdār is found in Ibn Hawqal’s younger contemporary, al-Istakhri, who for this information relied on the former.

³⁶³ BARTHOLD, 1966b, pp.110.

documents.³⁶⁴ He proposed that the Wizd might be the contemporary town of Qinghir, which was also located in the Urgut region.

Although the precise location of the monastery was not identified for a long time, it was commonly accepted that it was somewhere in the Urgut region. The ‘Urgut church’ was finally located and unearthed between the 2004 and 2007 (details will be given below).

2. *The history of Bukhara* (943 CE), by Abu Bakr Narshakhi, a native of Bukhara writing in early 10th century:

“When you enter the city proper, the quarter to the left is called the ‘quarter of the rogues.’ Before this time a Christian church was there, but now it is a mosque of the Banī Hanzala.”³⁶⁵

In contrast to Ibn Hawqal’s testimony, Narshakhi’s report has not been yet confirmed by archaeological evidence. No church building has been excavated in Bukhara to date, although other material evidence is available, such as the coins discussed in the previous chapter.³⁶⁶

Judging from the topographic position of the church described in the text, it was located in the south-western part of the Bukhara citadel; that is to say, outside the ‘core’ of the city proper, which was surrounded by the citadel.³⁶⁷ This led Naymark to opine that, “it was definitely not the main temple of the city”, which implies that it was probably a small chapel or parish.³⁶⁸ On the other hand, Narshakhi’s observation that this church was converted into the mosque of one of the four main Arab tribes participating in campaigns, the Banī Hanzala, might suggest otherwise. It is likely that the area in which the church was located played a significant role in the overall economy or social life of the city, and therefore this may have prompted the decision to convert it into a mosque.³⁶⁹ Furthermore, one may also posit that the presence of the church in that part of Bukhara suggests that there was a sizeable Christian community. This implies that the conversion of the church into a mosque was strategic; that it was intended to attract a large group of people (who may have been of various social strata e.g. artisans, architects) to the new religion of the city.

³⁶⁴ SAVCHENKO, 1996, pp. 334.

³⁶⁵ FRYE, 1954, pp. 53.

³⁶⁶ However, in the view of the on-going archaeological excavation at the oasis of Bukhara it is probable that the archaeological evidence of this site will come forth at some point in future. This situation is similar to that of Mesopotamia and elsewhere in the Middle East where examples of ecclesiastical architecture were discovered gradually as excavations by various institutions were undertaken.

³⁶⁷ UMNIAKOV, 1923, pp. 149; BELENITSKIY, *et al*, 1973, pp. 238.

³⁶⁸ NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 293.

³⁶⁹ FRYE, 1954, pp. 54-55, 58 mentions of the following Arab tribes: *Banī Hanzala*, *Banī Asad*, *Banī Sa’d* and *Banī Quraish*.

Equally, the fact that Narshakhi has included this information in his history also suggests that the church in Bukhara was an important institution in its time. Being a native of the region, he may have heard of this church first hand or might even have seen it, albeit when it was no longer a church but a mosque. Accordingly, the inclusion of this event should be regarded as signifying the importance of the church, if not for the entire Bukharan oasis, at least for the area outside the city's citadel. This is suggested by the fact that Narshakhi was selective about the data he included in his work. Thus, he mentioned the church converted into a mosque in the Semirechye,³⁷⁰ but remained silent about the Urgut church, which was functioning in his time but mentioned by Ibn Hawqal some three decades later. However, for historiographical purposes, Narshakhi's record is a significant testimony, allowing us to pinpoint areas which possibly had dense Christian communities in Sogdiana and beyond.

Archaeological situation³⁷¹

In Sogdiana, the only definite Christian architecture excavated to date is the Urgut church.³⁷² The paucity of Christian architecture contrasts with the overwhelming bulk of religious architecture representing Buddhist and Zoroastrian structures.³⁷³

³⁷⁰ FRYE, 1954, pp.87, 150.

³⁷¹ GAIBOV & KOSHELENKO, 2006, pp. 136-177 provides a comprehensive survey of the archeological evidence relevant to the question of the history of Christianity in Persia, Central Asia and the Chinese Turkestan.

³⁷² There has been one other architectural remain discovered in the Urgut region interpreted as a Christian church. The site is known as 'Koshtepa 1'. For a ground plan and discussion see ISKHAKOV, *et al*, 1977, pp. 88-97 (reproduced in COMNENO, 1997, pp. 34-45). Some authors base their interpretation on the ground plan, which resembles Byzantine church plans; however they do not provide any specific parallels. Further, on interpreting the function of this site they rely on the semantics of a depiction in the rim of a *khum* (large ceramic vessel shred found *in situ*). The image displays two male figures with elaborate clothing. One figure is depicted standing, holding a book in one hand and in the other raised hand a cross. The 'second man' is shown kneeling down and seems to be wearing a crown and dressed in elaborate clothing. The author believed this to depict a baptismal ceremony. This evidence, however, is lost, and cannot be located. Despite the fact that the identification of this site as Christian has been accepted and indicated in much literature, I would question whether or not this is actually a church. First of all, one shred with a Christian scene is not compelling evidence to suggest that the building had a Christian ritual use - a larger assemblage with Christian provenance is needed to confirm this attribution. Considering the unusual floor plan for Christian architecture and the lack of other architectural and material evidence pointing to Christian ritual use, I am inclined to think that this was not a church.

³⁷³ In present scholarship, the best comparative studies on the history of Central Asian architecture is KHMEL'NITSKIĬ, 1992, *ibid*, 1996, *ibid*, 2000. These works systematically address the historical development of various architectural patterns in extant evidence from Central Asia. The author's classification of sites takes into account all kinds of architectural remains, such as towns houses, castles, forts, palaces, public and memorial buildings. In particular, his study of 'cult' architecture including places of worship, shrines and burials is most relevant as it includes discussions of Christian architecture of Central Asia (remains found in Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). A concise discussion, including comprehensive relevant bibliographic references, on the genesis of the Sogdian indigenous religions and on Zoroastrian architecture, using the example of Panjikent temples, is found in SHKODA, 2009, pp. 60-68. NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 299-308 discusses the Christian architecture of Central Asia as well as architecture known in Sogdiana.

However, this trend is not limited to Sogdiana alone, but is pertinent to the whole Central Asian region, where only six identifiably Christian edifices, including the Urgut church, have been excavated. These are the ‘Oval house’ monastery³⁷⁴, the Kharoba-Koshuk church³⁷⁵, the Aq-Beshim ‘building IV’³⁷⁶ and ‘building VIII’³⁷⁷, and the ‘Termez church’.³⁷⁸

Nevertheless, as Sergei Khmel’nitskiĭ remarked, “the Christian architecture of pre-Islamic Central Asia concedes the Buddhist one, in quantity of conserved and researched monumental remains, but not in historical and cultural significance.”³⁷⁹

Thus, the scarcity of known Christian (ecclesiastical and monastic) architectural remains does not imply that the Church of the East, which until the arrival of the Latin-speaking missionaries in Central Asia (13th century) was the main expression of Christianity, had established few institutions architecturally. The surviving examples of Christian architecture are thus significant testimony to the existence of an architectural tradition within the Church of the East in Sogdiana that was still attested in the thirteenth century.

Marco Polo, in his travelogue *Oriente Poliano* made particular mention of a church in the city of Samarqand commemorating the conversion of Chagatai and dedicated to John the Baptist.³⁸⁰ James Ryan has recently cast doubt on Polo’s account, stating that “the report that the Eljigidei Khan (1327-1330 CE) built a church at Samarkand, dedicated to St. John Baptist, raises questions; a suspiciously similar reported was made concerning Chaghatay, who supposedly constructed a church of the same name at “Summachra.””³⁸¹ However, the significance of Polo’s account, over and above its historical accuracy, is that in the 13th century in Sogdiana there was an unambiguously recognizable Christian structure.

Therefore, this may be considered to support the proposal that in the region of Sogdiana there was a continuous tradition of Christian architecture distinct from that of other faiths. Furthermore, the fact that Samarqand was one of the provinces of the Church of the East also suggests the possible existence of various further Christian architectural structures in the region, which yet remain undiscovered. According to the archaeological observations report

³⁷⁴ DRESVYANSKYA, 1974, pp. 155-181.

³⁷⁵ PUGACHENKOVA, 1954.

³⁷⁶ KYZLASOV, 1959b, pp.155-227. The term used in Russian excavation reports is ‘объект - object’. Since it refers to architecture here, it is designated by ‘building’. SEMENOV, 2002a, pp. 4-10 provides a comprehensive survey of the history of research in Aq-Beshim.

³⁷⁷ SEMENOV & TASHBAEVA, 1997, pp. 48-51; SEMENOV, 2002b, pp. 11-115. The term used in Russian excavation reports is ‘объект - object’. Since it refers to architecture here, it is designated by ‘building’

³⁷⁸ ALBAUM, 1994, pp.34-41.

³⁷⁹ KHMEL’NITSKIĬ, 2000, pp. 241. He found it problematic that on the one hand the literary sources tell of the continuous presence of Christianity from as early as 3rd century, but on the other hand archaeology has not yielded much material evidence, especially architectural.

³⁸⁰ LATHAM, 1981, pp. 61-62.

³⁸¹ RYAN, 1998, pp.366.

by Yuri Buryakov *et al*, conducted in the course of construction projects near Registan Square in Samarqand in 1968, on the excavation floor, about 6-7 metres deep, a mosaic with an equatorial cross pattern was observed. In the same report, it is said that some metallic (bronze) pendants in the shape of equilateral crosses were recovered; however no physical evidence of these artefacts exists today.³⁸² Considering the material evidence collected during the excavation in Registan Square, which largely belongs to the Timurid Era (14th - 15th centuries), the church remains noted in the report could have been the remains of the Church of St. John the Baptist recorded by Polo or his possible informant Mar Sergius.

The Urgut church

The Urgut church is located about 30 km from Samarqand in Sufiyon mahala, in the area also known as Sulaimonteppa (hill of Solomon). Preliminary investigation of the site was carried out between 1995 and 1999 by members of *The East Sogdian Archaeological Expedition*. The systematic excavation of the site was then undertaken between 2004 and 2007 by the Expedition in cooperation with *The Samarqand Institute of Archaeology*. The excavation team was led by Alexei Savchenko.

To date, no specific comprehensive hard-copy publication about this site is available.³⁸³ The only available material includes brief reports from each excavation season, published on the webpage of *The Society for Exploration of Eurasia*.³⁸⁴ Additionally, five separate short articles have been published, three dealing primarily with background literature and the issue of the localization of the site based on Ibn Hawqal's reference.³⁸⁵

Physical format and ground plan

The Urgut church building was rectangular with two naves oriented in an easterly direction with a deviation of 3° to the north.³⁸⁶ The walls of the structure were made from different sorts of baked bricks typical of the Samanid and Qarakhanid period.³⁸⁷

³⁸² BURYAKOVA & BURYAKOV, 1972, pp.174-223. During my field work in Uzbekistan, I met with the lead-archaeologist of the expedition of 1968, Yuri Buryakov, and have surveyed the materials of the expedition at the warehouse of the Samarqand Museum, at Afrasiab, but could not find these items in the collection of the museum. According to Buryakov, the photographs taken during the archaeological work have been lost and no other material proof can be brought forward except his testimony as an eyewitness.

³⁸³ Mark Dickens informed me that archaeological material from Urgut including epigraphic evidence will appear in the *Journal of Semitic Studies* in due course.

³⁸⁴ For relevant reports concerning the excavation of this site see http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/projekt_2.htm (accessed on 16-06-2011).

³⁸⁵ On the historical background, including a wide range of bibliographical references and images from excavations of this monument see SAVCHENKO, 1996, pp. 333-54; *ibid*, 2005, pp. 333-338; *ibid*, 2006, pp. 551-555; SAVCHENKO & DICKENS, 2009, pp. 121-135; SAVCHENKO, 2010, pp. 74-82.

³⁸⁶ SAVCHENKO, 2005, pp.335.

The naves were separated by a raised platform (*bema*) in the centre, measuring 9.30 x 3.35 metres. The skeletal (contour) wall of the *bema* was built from fired bricks of 30 x 15 x 5 centimetres and was filled with tightly compacted loess.³⁸⁸

The main entrance, with an arched doorway, was situated in the western wall with a “rectangular narthex paved with altering rows of long and cross-laid fired bricks”, which led directly into the northern nave.³⁸⁹ The main entrance, according to the results of the 2006 excavation, “had been filled with rubble, which probably indicates a squatter occupational period of the complex.”³⁹⁰ The floor of this nave was paved in two layers of ceramic tiles (30 x 20 x 2.5cm).

The southern nave was connected and accessed from the northern nave by a narrow corridor, immediately from the entrance.³⁹¹ Like the northern aisle, it also extended along the east-west axis and was framed by an approximately 1.5 metre thick mud brick wall faced with several rows of fired brick from the inside. It had two doorways on the southern wall, one of which was intentionally filled with rubble and brick pieces.

The floor in the southern nave was paved by fired bricks of 23 x 23 x 5 cm.³⁹² In both naves, cubical altars built of fired bricks were located at the chancel in the east end. Steps (stone steps in the northern nave and fired brick steps in the southern nave) marked the entrance of the chancel, accessed through a low narrow passage in the Church of the East liturgical-architectural tradition called a *šqāqōnā*.³⁹³ The layout of the chancel in the northern nave was cross-shaped. To the south, it was flanked by another room, which possibly functioned as a *diaconicon*, a room which was used by deacons to prepare the Eucharist elements or where

³⁸⁷ SAVCHENKO, 2005, pp. 336-337. The available archaeological reports did not explicitly explain whether this variation of fired bricks used in construction of the church (Samanid (819-999 CE) and Qarakhanid era (999-1211 CE)) implies different phases of construction of the building or subsequent repairs. However, considering that the edifice was not very big, I am inclined to understand this as indicating subsequent repairs, which is logical based on the supposition that the church was continually functioning.

³⁸⁸ SAVCHENKO, 2005, pp. 336-337.

³⁸⁹ SAVCHENKO & DICKENS, 2009, pp. 128.

³⁹⁰ SAVCHENKO, 2006, Excavations in Urgut: June - July 2006 Progress Report at http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/projekt_2.htm#2006 (accessed on 16-06-2011)

³⁹¹ SAVCHENKO & DICKENS, 2009, pp. 128-130, made an assumption that the northern nave was probably the main chapel, because it had an entrance from the western wall side. However, given the fact that the southern nave was longer and wider in size, I wonder if this assumption can be qualified in some other manner. In addition, the northern nave had two doorways, although the dating of the closing of these doorways is not known. However, considering this fact in relation to the size of the nave, it may be that the northern nave was the main hall, and thus required two entrance/exits.

³⁹² SAVCHENKO, 2005, pp. 336-337.

³⁹³ Discussion of this liturgical architectural element of the East Syriac church is found in LOOSLEY, 2012, pp. 9, where she described it as “the sacred pathway”, which is similar to the *solea* known in Greek-speaking areas of Syria. “Whilst the *solea* appears to have fulfilled a practical function in linking the sanctuary to the *ambon*, the *bet- šqāqone* appears to have had a more mystical dimension as the bridge between the heavenly and the earthly Jerusalem. This phenomenon of the *bet- šqāqone* seems to have been exclusively linked to Mesopotamia and we cannot immediately extend this concept to the *bemata* of Syria or Tur ‘Abdin.”

the baptism font was situated. Due to the poor state of preservation, the exact layout of this chamber cannot be reconstructed. However, its presence as part of the liturgical furnishing of the church can be observed from the difference in the formation of the paving and bricks discovered between the northern and southern chancels, in the east end of the church.

At the east end of the southern nave, the floor elevates to form several steps leading outside the main eastern wall, beyond which are the remains of another building. Judging from the gypsum plastering of the paved floor, it appears to have been integral to the church proper. There is present a rectangular base (altar?) built of fired brick in the centre of the building. At the rear end the wall had a round-shaped niche furnished with a ceramic plaque. Its furnishings, rectangular base, and niche, have been thought to “suggest its use as an oratorium [that was] external to the main nave.”³⁹⁴

The Urgut church complex also had a separate kitchen and dining hall, both located to the north. The dining hall had the “same proportions and the altar-like structure of the eastern end” but lacked the other liturgical furnishings present in the northern and southern naves.³⁹⁵ A wine cellar was located in the west, adjunct to the southern nave’s external wall and possibly a tower.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁴SAVCHENKO, 2005, Excavations in Urgut: August–October 2005 Progress Report at http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/projekt_2.htm (accessed on 16-06-2011).

³⁹⁵SAVCHENKO, 2007, Excavations in Urgut: June - July 2007; Progress Report in http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/projekt_2.htm#2007(accessed on 16-06-2011)

³⁹⁶ SAVCHENKO, 2010, pp. 77-79. However, the author did not discuss the basis of his view about the existence of a tower in the Urgut church. The provided ground plan and the foundation of the church do not suggest it included a tower.

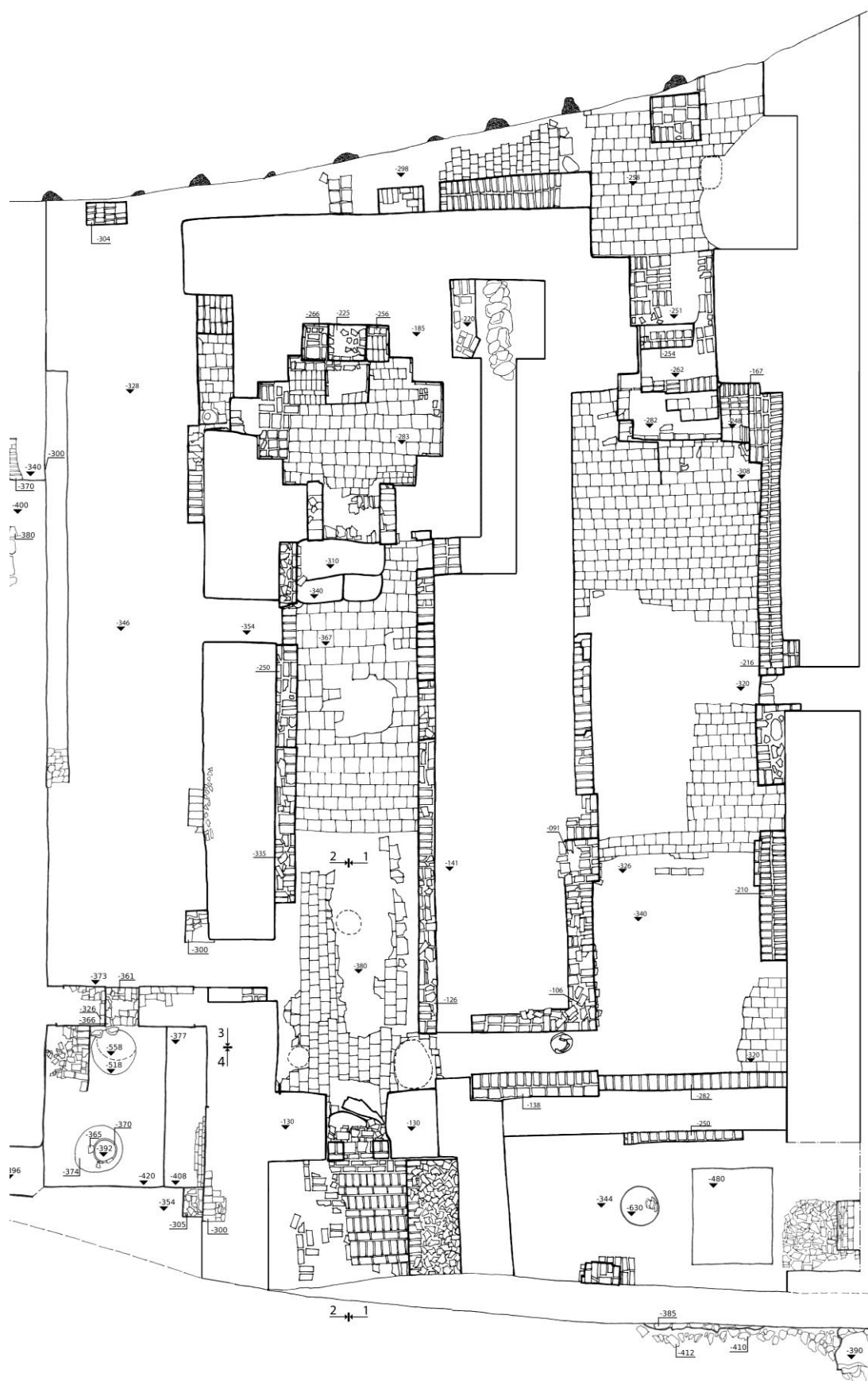


Figure 27: The Urgut church ground plan © Savchenko, 2010

In his description of the architectural elements of the Urgut church in 2009, Savchenko asserted that the platform in the middle served “as a base for a church tower.”³⁹⁷ However, it is unlikely that the church included a tower, particularly in the view of Savchenko’s previous identification of this platform in 2005 as a *bema*.³⁹⁸

“The overall layout of the complex can be conveniently described as two aisles separated by a raised platform in the centre... The top of the platform could be reached through the aperture in its western wall, which must have been followed by a mud brick or loess stairway, not preserved. I believe that the most plausible interpretation of this platform is as a *bēma*, which played an important role in the liturgical setting of the Eastern Syrian churches and was situated in the centre of the nave (although the exact position varies).”³⁹⁹



Figure 28: The church with the platform (bema) in the centre, seen from the East. Image reproduced after Savchenko, 2006

³⁹⁷ SAVCHENKO & DICKENS, 2009, pp. 128.

³⁹⁸ A *bema* is a raised platform usually set in the centre of the *haykla* (nave) facing East, however, current archaeological examples display different positionings of the *bema*. From a liturgical perspectives, the *bema* is an important component in the structure of the Church of the East’s ecclesiastical architecture, used for performing liturgical celebration. A more recent comprehensive study of the *bema*, surveying archaeological evidence from North Syria and Tur ‘Abdin, including a thorough examination of primary sources, is found in LOOSLEY, 2003.

³⁹⁹ SAVCHENKO, 2005, Excavations 2005: Brief Report in http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/projekt_2.htm#2005 (accessed on 16-06-2011).



Figure 29: Hypothetical 3D model of the Urgut church based on the ground plan given in Savchenko, 2010

Construction material and furnishings

The Urgut church was built from fired and mud bricks of varying shapes and size (30 x 15 x 5 cm, 23 x 23 x 5 cm, 30 x 30 x 5 cm and 27 x 8 x 5 cm). However, from the reports, it is not possible to determine if the size difference of the bricks indicates the different wall sections in which they were used (skeletal wall, internal wall, on the foundation level or on the upper level); or different phases of construction (repair, latter sections that were added).⁴⁰⁰ In the archaeological reports, only the brick size used for the construction of the *bema* has been clearly specified (30 x 15 x 5 cm).⁴⁰¹

Ceramic tiles (30 x 20 x 2.5 cm) and fired bricks were used for the pavement in the interior. Most tiles still intact in the building are those that were used on the floor. A tile fragment engraved with the symbol of the cross, which was found during the excavation, was probably used for decorating the wall. The “fragments of decorative plaster and remains of emerald-

⁴⁰⁰ SAVCHENKO, 2005, pp. 336-337.

⁴⁰¹ SAVCHENKO, 2005, pp. 337.

green, carmine, ochre, white and cobalt stucco” found among rubble, which might have fallen from a wall, indicate that some sections of the interior walls also had coloured ornaments.⁴⁰²

The internal walls were furnished with niches, probably to hold lanterns and other liturgical objects.⁴⁰³ The walls were approximately 3 metres high and 1.5 metres thick.⁴⁰⁴ Commenting on the layout of the wall, Savchenko states that, “despite being very neatly erected, [they] deviate from the magnetic axis by 15°. This [aberration might be] explained by the simple fact that, in the absence of a compass, the builders’ only reference points were those of sunrise and sunset.”⁴⁰⁵

Access and doorways

Although the church had one main entrance (indicated by its arched layout and narthex) based on descriptions of the doorways and the functionality of some of the adjunct chambers, the church could have been accessible from four sides:

1. From the south: through the southern nave, indicated by two doorways, one that was discovered at the time of excavation to have been sealed off by rubble.
2. From the west: via the narthex leading into the northern nave.
3. From the kitchen: the refectory was connected by two doorways visible on the main northern wall. How the kitchen was accessed is not described. However, it probably had entrances from both western sides aligned with the main church entrance as well as from the east end. It is impossible to imagine that firewood or other products used in the kitchen would have been carried in through the main nave.

Although the state of the preservation of the wall does not allow for the reconstruction of any windows in the church, it is possible that the church had some sort of fenestration. The main light source was probably from oil-lanterns that were kept in the niches within the church.

⁴⁰²SAVCHENKO, 2004, *Excavations 2004: Brief Report* in http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/projekt_2.htm (accessed on 16-06-2011).

⁴⁰³ SAVCHENKO & DICKENS, 2009, pp. 129 Although the author here refers to “a great many oil-lamps typical of the area [that] were found during the excavations throughout the site”, the material culture objects published in the reports include one sample of a half-preserved stone lantern and one well-preserved ceramic lantern typical of the 13th century.

⁴⁰⁴SAVCHENKO, 2004, *Excavations 2004: Brief Report* in http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/projekt_2.htm#2004 (accessed on 16-06-2011). The excavation report supplies the thickness of the outer wall of the southern nave only. This measurement here is applied to the entire outer wall, assuming uniformity in construction. However, it is possible that the wall dividing the ‘northern’ nave and the refectory was of a different thickness, as it was not an outer wall, but an inner wall. Again, however, if the refectory happened to be later addition to the church building and not covered by the church roof, than it could be that this dividing wall was an outer wall and had the same dimensions. But without proper measurement being available it is hard to decide.

⁴⁰⁵SAVCHENKO, 2005, *Excavations 2005: Brief Report* in http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/projekt_2.htm#2005 (accessed on 16-06-2011).



Figure 30: Collapsed arches of the main entrance. View from the inside of the church. Reproduced after Savchenko, 2005

Architectural parallels

Discussing the architectural layout of the Urgut church complex, Savchenko said that “the main problem presented by the ground plan is that of the prototypes.”⁴⁰⁶ However, the major architectural feature of the Urgut church- the cross-shaped chancel terminating at the nave - has parallels in the church architecture of both Central Asia, exemplified by the church complexes discovered at Aq-Beshim⁴⁰⁷, and of churches of the Tur Abdin region and Hira.⁴⁰⁸ In Savchenko’s opinion, “the closest architectural parallel seems to be found in Church 7 in Hakkari.”⁴⁰⁹ This impression was based, however, on visual features of the ground plans of

⁴⁰⁶ SAVCHENKO, 2006, Excavations in Urgut: June-July 2006; Progress Report at http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/projekt_2.htm#2006 (accessed on 16-06-2011).

⁴⁰⁷ For a history of the archaeological research of Aq-Beshim and results of the most recent excavations, including relevant bibliographic reference see SEMENOV, 2002, pp. 4-114.

⁴⁰⁸ A relevant bibliography and ground plans of the churches mentioned is found in SAVCHENKO, Excavations in Urgut: June - July 2006; Progress Report at http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/projekt_2.htm#2006 (accessed on 16-06-2011).

⁴⁰⁹ SAVCHENKO, Excavations in Urgut: June - July 2006; Progress Report at http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/projekt_2.htm#2006 (accessed on 16-06-2011). This church (church 7) was identified by DAUPHIN, 1976, pp. 56-67 as Mar Awraha. SAVCHENKO, 2005, 337, also includes Sir Bani Yas in his list of the ‘prototypes’. “Исходя из планировки помещения, строительных техник и материалов, ближайшими параллелями являются христианские монастыри того же времени на острове Сир Бани Йас у побережья Абу Даби.”

these two churches and no further comprehensive comparative examination between them was undertaken.⁴¹⁰

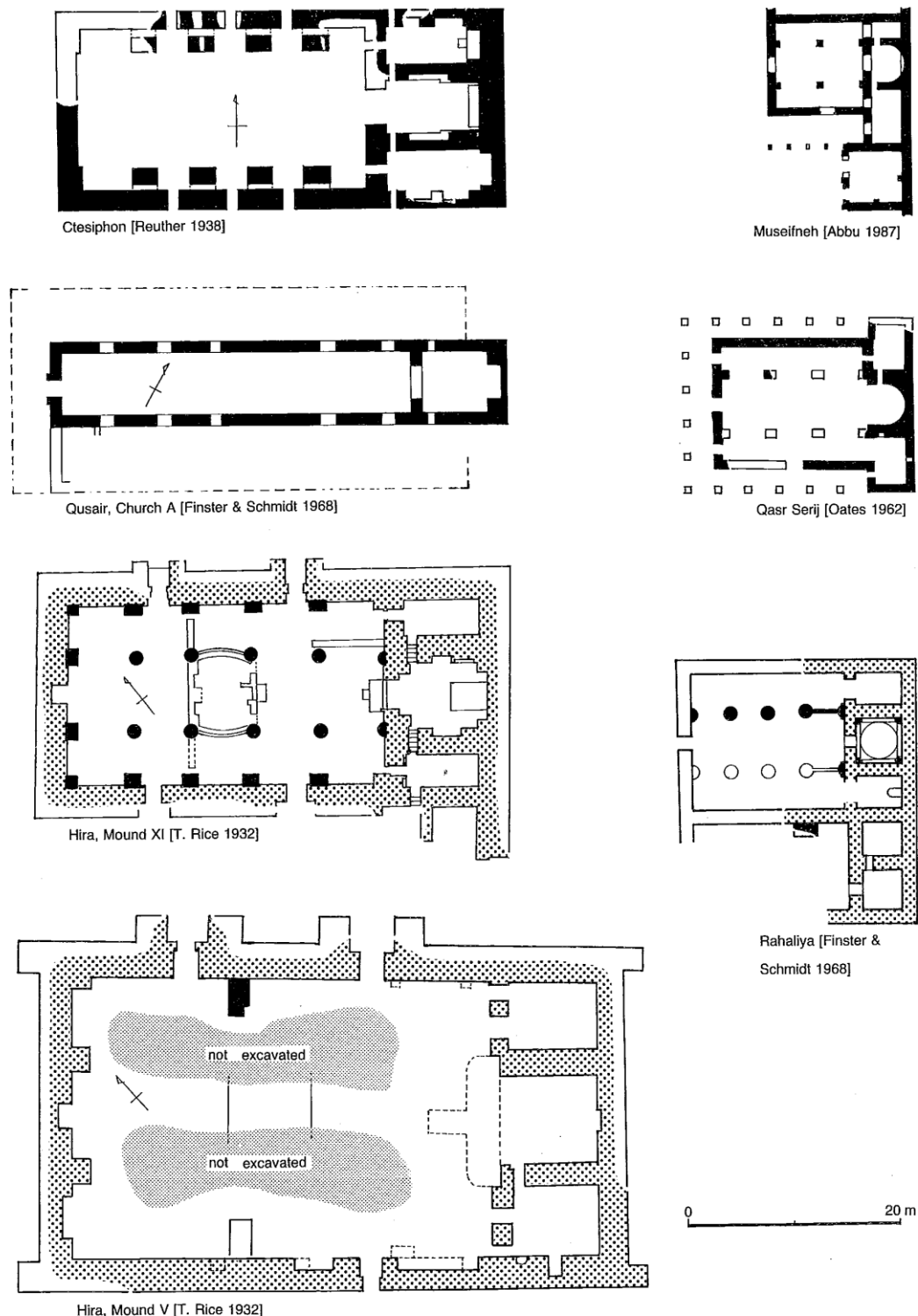


Figure 31: Early churches from Iraq reproduced after OKADA, 1991

⁴¹⁰ The excavation reports including existing publications do not provide detailed synchronic examination of the structure with its so-called prototypes. Only the ground plan as visual examples is given. Further, the relationship of this edifice in the frame of development of the architecture of the Church of the East is not also taken into account.

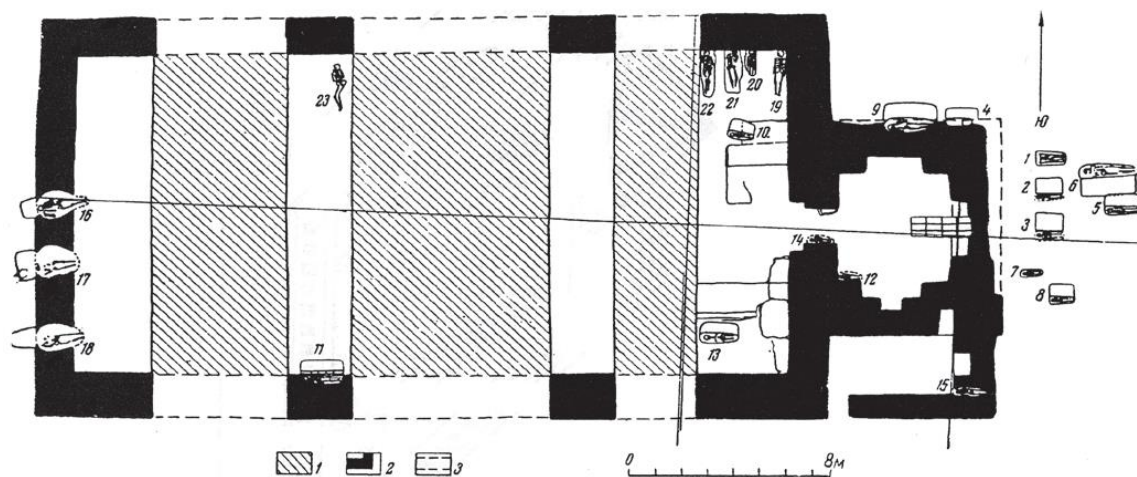


Figure 32: Aq-Beshim 'building IV' reproduced after Kyzlasov, 1954 (the image also shows the burials that were discovered)

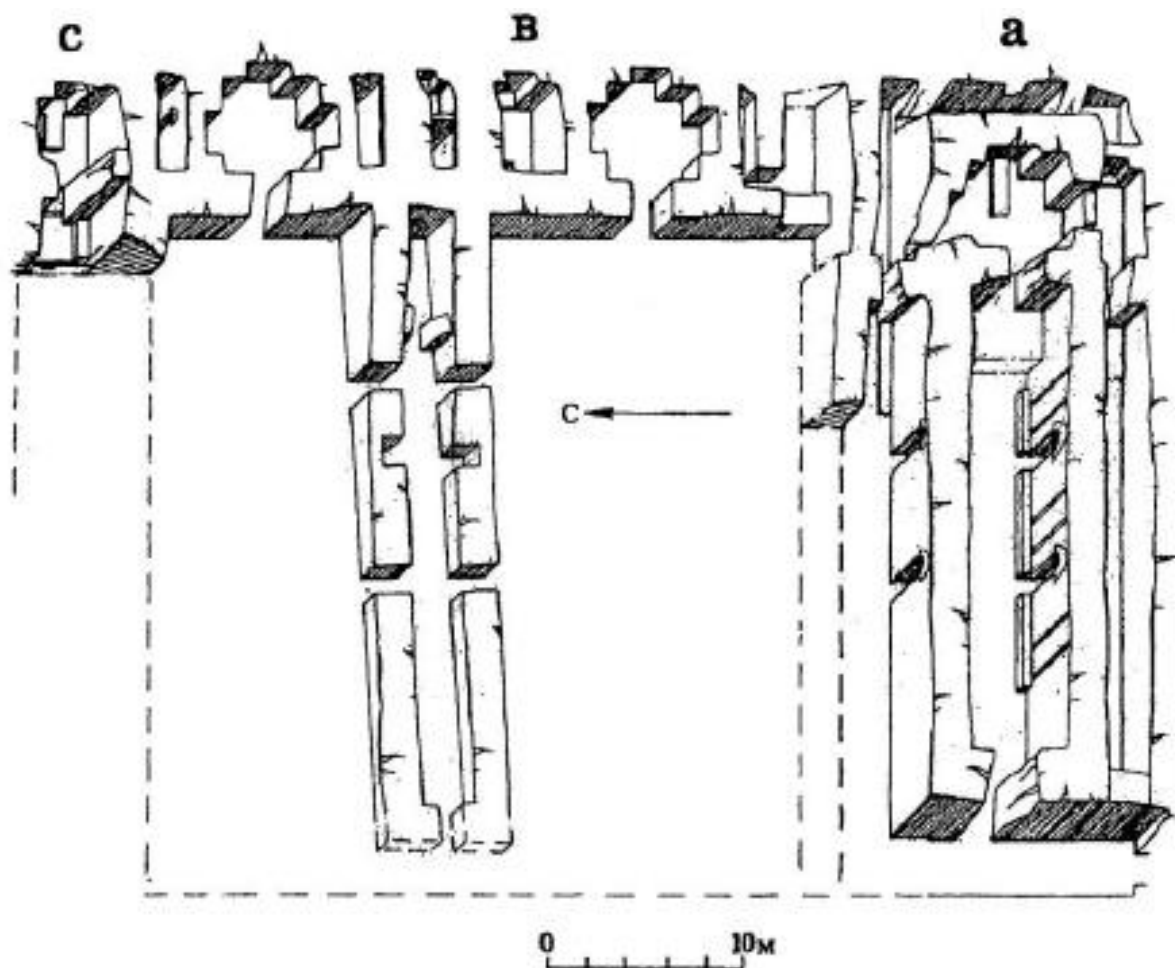


Figure 33: Aq-Beshim 'building VIII' reproduced after Semenov, 1999

Date

Archaeological examination has revealed that the Urgut church experienced several phases of occupation, and that its decline took place gradually over a long period.⁴¹¹ Based on numismatic evidence, specifically a bronze coin of Turghar (type B) dated to the first quarter of the eighth century, as well as the C-14 dating of organic materials and ceramics, the church functioned between the seventh and thirteenth centuries.⁴¹² Collateral evidence that may point to the date of the Urgut church is the Syriac inscription incised on a rock at nearby Qizil-qiya that records “August of the year 1206 [of Alexander]” = August 895.⁴¹³

The Urgut church: architectural contexts

The Urgut church, in its architectural typology, including its liturgical architectural elements, is comparable to existing examples of Christian architecture known both in Mesopotamia and Central Asia.⁴¹⁴ Specifically, it displays similarities with East Syrian church architecture. As such, the first aspect of its architectural reality is that it represents the architectural style of a specific ecclesiastical tradition, namely the Church of the East, which for many centuries was the dominant expression of Christianity east of the Euphrates and beyond, in Central Asia and China.

Consequently, though it is the only evidence from Sogdiana, typologically it is part of a larger group of architectural corpora. On the basis of its architectural features, the Urgut church can be placed in both its immediate regional context, that is Sogdiana/Central Asia, as well as in the wider and more geographically extensive context of the Church of the East.

The majority of the architectural evidence of the Church of the East known today has been found in Mesopotamia proper, i.e. east of the Euphrates at Ctesiphon and in the western flank

⁴¹¹The various phases of the occupation of the church, however, are not satisfactory explained. The only evidence given in the reports is that certain doorways were filled with rubble. However, in architectural analysis, there might be other possible means to examine this, such as analysing the use of different shapes or sizes of bricks, which differ from the original brickwork, which could well indicate repair works or an additional building phase.

⁴¹²SAVCHENKO, 2006, Excavations in Urgut: June - July 2006; Progress Report at http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/projekt_2.htm#2006 (accessed on 16-06-2011). However, the reign of Turghar was not in the first quarter of the eighth century as suggested by Savchenko. As established by SMIRNOVA, 1981, pp. 44-45 the Turghar type 2 coins were issued in “40-м годам VIII в., последние - к 755 г.” i.e. ca. 740-755 CE. Accordingly, the Urgut Church functioned from the 8th to 13th century.

⁴¹³TARDIEU, 1999, pp.42.

⁴¹⁴A relevant bibliography and ground plans of the churches mentioned is found in SAVCHENKO, 2006, Excavations in Urgut: June - July 2006; Progress Report at http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/projekt_2.htm#2006 (accessed on 16-06-2011).

of Hira, as well as down the Gulf and further afield in the eastern extremities of the Sassanid Empire, at the Marv oasis and in the Semirechye region *en route* to China.⁴¹⁵

Some examples of Church of the East architecture

The patriarchal church located in Seleucia that served as a 'headquarters' for the Church of the East was excavated on the western side of the Ctesiphon, a twin city of Seleucia.⁴¹⁶ Oscar Reuther described the church as having had a rectangular plan (27.18 x 15.06 metres), built of fired brick and a "[single] nave roofed with a barrel-vault supported on pillared walls."⁴¹⁷ Its sanctuary was flanked by *pastophoria* (*prosthesis* and *diaconicon*).⁴¹⁸ These two were accessed via narrow doorways cut out of the western edge of these rooms. A special feature of the sanctuary chamber was that it had rectangular niches that were cut out of the north and south walls. The liturgical furnishing of the church did not include *bema*.⁴¹⁹

In addition, architectural examination revealed that this church was built on top of (ruins?) of a smaller church, which had a narrower nave than the 'upper' structure and had thick, rounded pillars on square bases along the sidewalls.⁴²⁰ The date of the monument (seventh century) is confirmed by an ostrakon bearing an inscription that was unearthed from a deposit under the church floor.⁴²¹

Hira, southwest of Ctesiphon, on the western flank of Mesopotamia, bordering the great desert that stretched to Arabia and Syria, has yielded a significant amount of Christian

⁴¹⁵ For a comprehensive survey of the Christian architecture of Mesopotamia and its related architectural models in Central Asia, including a relevant bibliography, see HUNTER & HORN, 2012, pp.1094-1112.

⁴¹⁶ Excavations were carried at the mound of Qasr bint al-Qadi by the German Oriental Society in 1928-29. As pointed out in FIEY, 1964, pp. 3, the excavations at the twin cities of Seleucia and Ctesiphon were carried out between 1927 and 1932 by German and American teams. The reports and examinations of these excavations are found in REUTHER, 1929, pp. 434-451, MAYER, 1929, pp. 1-27. FIEY, 1964, pp. 18 posed the question of whether the Qasr bint al-Qadi was the 'great' patriarchal church of Seleucia or not. So far this question remains open.

⁴¹⁷ REUTHER, 1929, pp. 449.

⁴¹⁸ According to the description of church architecture provided in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (2.57.1) '*pastophoria*' refers to two rooms, one on either side of the apse. Among other purposes, they were used to store the unused portion of the Eucharist (8.13). However, archaeological scholarship has designated one of these two chambers flanking the sanctuary or apse as a '*prosthesis*' (on the north side of the sanctuary), thought to be used for the preparation of the Eucharist; and the other (on the south side), a '*diaconicon*'. In Syrian Christian architecture these two architectural elements probably evolved from the late fourth century, assuming a distinctive form in the fifth century. Thus the *prosthesis* and *diaconicon* are typologically a characteristic of the architecture of eastern churches. However, as DESCOEUDRES, 1983, pp. 130-132 has shown, the special rite of preparation of Eucharist- called *prosthesis* (in the Byzantine East tradition) did not exist until the last part of the eleventh century. The Eucharist before then was prepared at the entrance of the church or even outside it in a room known as the *scevoiphilacion*. A room called the *diaconicon* in the existing early medieval literary sources was not assigned a function. Accordingly, *pastophoria* is perhaps a better term to designate these two chambers that are often found in Syrian Christian architecture. More discussion on these particular architectural elements is found in HOPFNER, 1949, pp. 2107-2109.

⁴¹⁹ REUTHER, 1929, pp. 449.

⁴²⁰ REUTHER, 1929, pp. 449, fig 2.

⁴²¹ HUNTER, 1997, pp.361-367 the discussion about dating found in pp.366.

architecture, showing that it was an important locus of Christianity, as was recognized by later Muslim authors. At Hira, two church buildings were excavated (known as 'Mound V' and 'Mound XI') which, based on their architectural features and mural paintings, were dated to between the sixth and seventh centuries.⁴²²

'Hira-Mound XI' has a three-nave church built from mud bricks. The naves were divided by four pairs of the detached columns. There was a barrier extending north-south across all three naves which, at the second pair of columns pair from the west, divided the western two-fifths of the naves from the eastern nave. The east end of the church has three rooms: the sanctuary and the *pastophoria* by which it was flanked. The *pastophoria* were accessed via narrow doorways cut out of the western edge of these rooms.

The *bema* was positioned east of this barrier in the space occupying the central nave towards the east end. The *bema* walls in the north and south curved outward and contained benches.⁴²³

'Hira-Mound V', though not well preserved, bears many similar architectural features to 'Hira-Mound XI', such as the presence of *bema* and *pastophoria*. However, as evident from the excavated section, it was a church of one-nave, although it is possible that columns existed in the sections that were excavated; which would mean it had possibly two or three naves. Both church buildings at Hira were built with a south-easterly orientation. Excavation reports supply many fine examples of the plaster plaque crosses, which were used for the interior decoration of both churches.⁴²⁴ However, in the reports, it is not clear to which church specific pieces belonged.⁴²⁵

The island of Kharg, which lies approximately 25 miles offshore from Bushire in the Persian Gulf opposite Bahrain, yielded the remains of a three-nave church constructed of dressed stone and probably roofed by a three-barrel vault.⁴²⁶ The interior walls were decorated in stucco with stylistic features resembling Sassanid ornamentation.⁴²⁷ The monastery, which forms an outer wall of the church, constituted about sixty cells, each having three small chambers. Several small ruins were also associated with the church and monastic dwellings. Roman Ghirshman considers them to have been the accommodation of married clergy.⁴²⁸

⁴²²RICE, 1932a, pp. 254-268; *ibid*, 1932b, pp. 276-291; *ibid*, 1934, pp. 51-73. For a comparative study of the architectural features of these churches see OKADA, 1991, pp. 71-83; *ibid*, 1992, pp. 87-93.

⁴²³RICE, 1932b, pp. 280.

⁴²⁴RICE, 1932b, pp. 283-284. A useful comparative study of the crosses from the Gulf churches is POTTS, 1994, pp.61-65, which also provides bibliographical references to other relevant works.

⁴²⁵A more recent discussion of Hira and its Christian heritage is found in HUNTER, 2008, pp. 41-56.

⁴²⁶BOWMAN, 1974, pp. 217-220; *ibid*, 1975, pp. 49-64; GHIRSHMAN, 1971, pp.11-14, 17-22; HAERINCK, 1975, pp. 159-166.

⁴²⁷GHIRSHMAN, 1971, pp.13-14.

⁴²⁸GHIRSHMAN, 1971, pp.14.

However, it is also possible that these buildings, which were not far off, were used by pilgrims and visitors to the island. The church and monastic community of Kharg is believed to have come into existence from the third century and have continued until the eighth century.⁴²⁹

The excavations at the site of Ain Sha'ia in south-western Iraq unearthed a church and monastic complex.⁴³⁰ The monastery at Ain Sha'ia was located in the fortified complex and the church was three-nave (measuring approximately 14 by 22 metres) decorated with stucco and murals, and with a brick-paved courtyard.⁴³¹ The naves are divided by solid partition walls and there are three access points along their length. The east end has three rooms: a rectangular sanctuary flanked by *pastophoria*. The liturgical furnishing of the church did not include a *bema*.

Other edifices related to the Ain Sha'ia monastery are the so-called Dukakin caves. These caves are dug into marlstone stratum at the height of 40-45 metres in the cliff and are located to the west of the monastery. "They have twenty entrances on the north side and twenty-one on the south, and some caves are linked together without any intermission inside."⁴³² Ken Matsumoto in his descriptions of the site, in particular, Cave 1, noted that the floor at the entrance was laid with fired-brick and marlstone chips and inside, was coated with the chaff-mixed mud. "The living space is in the dimensions of 1.8 metres wide, 6.5 metres deep and 1.9 metres high with an annex of 1.0 metres wide, 2.2 metres deep and 1.9 metres high."⁴³³ The relationship of these caves with Ain Sha'ia is determined based on both their geographical location and the material finds, though these are few in number. As demonstrated by chisel traces observed in Cave 2, the Dukakin caves were artificially dug. "The inside part of the cave is smooth in ceiling but its floor surface is up-and-down in a zigzag way, viewed from a plan, while utilizing lots of cracks which run freely on the

⁴²⁹ BOWMAN, 1975, pp. 49-64. GHIRSHMAN, 1971, pp.11-14 considers the monument to be from the middle or late 5th century. The dating of many of the up to date known Christian sites in the Gulf and Mesopotamian region has been debated recently, primarily based on the result of ceramic studies. Many of these monastic complexes are now thought to date to the 8th or 9th centuries, which is two or three century later than previously suggested date (sixth or seventh centuries). This shift in dating, however, as CARTER, 2008, pp. 103 indicated does not "reflect the introduction of Christianity but simply a change in the quantity or disposition of resources, evident as a burst of building activity."

⁴³⁰ FUJII *et al*, 1989, pp.27-88.

⁴³¹ OKADA, 1991, pp. 71-83 the church outline is given in Fig.1 and details on measurements are found in pp. 73-74.

⁴³² SHIBATA, 1989, pp.33-34.

⁴³³ MATSUMOTO, 1989, pp.84.

marlstone of the cliff component.”⁴³⁴ The Ain Sha’ia monastery, including the Dukakin cave community, ceased to function in the ninth century.⁴³⁵

Significant items of material culture discovered in the Ain Sha’ia complex include pieces of twelve plaque crosses and inscriptions.⁴³⁶ All the crosses are typologically similar to those observed at Hira and in other churches of the Gulf and Mesopotamia. Some plaques include floral and geometrical motifs; in some of the plaques the cross is positioned beneath an arch.⁴³⁷ As far as the excavation reports inform us, none of the crosses were found within the church nave(s) or in the sanctuary; though it is unclear from the report whether most of the plaque crosses were discovered *in situ*.⁴³⁸ At any rate, the presence of decorative elements is invaluable for understating the interior décor of Church of the East churches. And of course, these provide evidence for comparative study with other churches.

The islands of Marwah and Sīr Banī Yās, located, respectively, circa 100 km and 170 km to the west of the city of Abu Dhabi, have also revealed two monastic complexes comprising a church and monastic settlement structures.⁴³⁹ Both the church buildings of Marwah and Sīr Banī Yās have identical dimension and layout, notably a deep chancel, a relatively short nave and a partition wall in the south chambers, which, as shown in Sīr Banī Yās, served as a foundation for the tower.⁴⁴⁰ The material culture objects collected from the site, including the C-14 testing, have shown that these sites were occupied and functioning from the sixth to mid-seventh centuries.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁴ MATSUMOTO, 1989, pp.85.

⁴³⁵ OKADA, 1991, pp. 74

⁴³⁶ A discussion of the cross plaques from Ain Sha’ia is found in OKADA, 1990, pp.103-112 especially pp.105. For an examination of the inscriptions found at Ain Sha’ia see HUNTER, 1989, pp. 89-108

⁴³⁷ OKADA, 1990, pp.104.

⁴³⁸ OKADA, 1990, pp. 109. On pp. 104, the author describes cross nos. 8 and 10 being found from “upper filling”.

⁴³⁹ A survey of the archaeological expedition and its preliminary findings and their interpretation is found in KING *et al*, 1995, pp. 63-74; KING, 1997.

⁴⁴⁰ ELDERS, 2001, pp. 54-55, fig. 5. The identification of the building in Marwah as a church is, however, tentative, as only the south-eastern corner was excavated. Nevertheless, as shown by the excavated section, the layout and size of the building is nearly identical to the corresponding sections of the church at Sīr Banī Yās. In particular, the division of the *pastophoria* by a north-south wall into two small chambers.

⁴⁴¹ ELDERS, 2001, pp. 49, 56. In particular ELDERS, 2001, pp. 49, has identified three development phases for the Sīr Banī Yās complex: “1) the beginning of construction of the church; 2-a) the ‘provisional’ church with its unfinished north aisle and rough floors; 2-b) the finished church with narthex; and 3) post-monastic occupation”. More recently, CARTER, 2008, pp. 71-208 has provided a more refined approach to the dating and chronology issues of these sites. In particular, based on the study of the ceramics of these sites, he concluded that 1) the monastic settlements discovered at both Sīr Banī Yās and Kharg could have been constructed no earlier than the late seventh century; 2) both these monasteries flourished between the late seventh century and the middle of the eighth century; and 3) while the Sīr Banī Yās monastery was abandoned at some point in the middle of the eighth century, the monastic site at Kharg apparently lasted until the ninth century.

A church and monastery complex is also known from a site on the island of Al-Qusur of Failaka, Kuwait.⁴⁴² The church measures 36 by 19 meters and in its environs, several other smaller constructions were observed. The church, in many aspects, is similar to that of Ain Sha'ia: three-nave, built from mud brick, its naves divided by solid partitions, with three access points along the wall dividing the naves. The rectangular sanctuary is located in the east-end and is flanked by the *pastophoria*. An interesting feature of the *pastophoria* at al-Qusur is that each chamber contained niches on the north, south, and east walls. In the eastern niche of the *pastophoria* in the northern nave, four grooves in the plaster floor were observed. They are thought to indicate the presence of a table or altar.⁴⁴³

A narthex was located on the west side and there were two burial niches located in the southern nave within the partition wall discovered. According to the excavation report, the church at Al-Qusur was built in the early seventh century and diminished in the late eighth or ninth centuries.⁴⁴⁴ Two monumental plaque crosses in plaster were discovered at this church; the first plaque was found in the southern nave and depicts a cross surrounded by a geometrical and floral frame.⁴⁴⁵ The shape of the cross and its floral-geometric frame design is comparable to those from other Christian sites in Mesopotamia and in the Gulf region, such as Kharg and Ain Sha'ia.

Other specimens of Church of the East architecture are known from the gulf coast of Saudi Arabia, at Jubail⁴⁴⁶ and Jebel Berri.⁴⁴⁷ These churches in many aspects also demonstrate similarity with those of Ain Sha'ia and Al-Qusur. The churches show commonality of dimension, layout, internal décor (with stucco), and chronology of occupation.⁴⁴⁸ In addition, the church building at Jubail also included a *bema*.⁴⁴⁹ The physical structure of the Jubail church comprised a walled open-courtyard ($\approx 15020 \text{ m}^2$) and three rooms located at the far east end, of which the middle room “contains [the] distinctive feature[of] a sanctuary with a raised platform, *bema* [βῶμος], along the east wall”.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴² A detailed report on the excavation is found in BERNARD *et al*, 1991, pp.145-181. A shorter account of the excavation with an overview of the material culture finds and a plan of the edifies is found in BERNARD & SALLES, 1991, pp.7-21; church plan Fig. 1.

⁴⁴³ BERNARD & SALLES, 1991, pp.9-10.

⁴⁴⁴ BERNARD & SALLES, 1991, pp.12. The entire complex has seen several phases of occupation and at certain points was used for other purposes than as a church building. The date was primarily established on the basis of the pottery collected from the site.

⁴⁴⁵ BERNARD & SALLES, 1991, pp.9-10, fig.2.

⁴⁴⁶ LANGFELDT, 1994, pp.32-60.

⁴⁴⁷ POTTS, 1994, pp.61-65.

⁴⁴⁸ Discussions of individual features are found in the abovementioned works. A comparative architectural examination of these sites is found in OKADA, 1992, pp. 87-93.

⁴⁴⁹ Detailed discussion and assessment is found in LANGFELDT, 1994, pp. 33-60.

⁴⁵⁰ LANGFELDT, 1994, pp.35.

The remains of two churches were discovered at the site of Qusur in south-western Iraq, of which one edifice is better preserved.⁴⁵¹ The church was originally a three-nave church; the naves were partitioned by a solid wall. It had a square sanctuary with a domed roof located in the east end. The church was constructed with stone foundations and mud brick and its walls were coated in plaster. It measured approximately 20 by 40 metres.⁴⁵² Judging by the remains of the doorways on the north and south walls of the sanctuary, it was flanked by *pastophoria*. No decorative elements were preserved. The church is dated to the late sixth or early seventh century.⁴⁵³

Another church in south-western Iraq was excavated at the site of Rahiliya. Like the Qusur church, it was constructed of stone and mud-bricks. It was a three-nave church divided by five sets of pillars measuring 15 by 23 metres. The pillars in the west end and east end were attached to the far-west and far-east walls dividing the nave and sanctuary, respectively. The church building also included subsidiary rooms located to the south of the church proper.⁴⁵⁴ The square sanctuary flanked by *pastophoria* was accessed from the central nave. The church was dated, on the basis of an examination of the ceramics assembled from the site, broadly to the late Sassanian period.⁴⁵⁵

In the exterior eastern provinces of the Sassanid Empire, Church of the East architecture is represented by the Kharoba-Koshuk church, located north of Marv on the road leading to Chorasmia.⁴⁵⁶ According to Galina Pugachenkova, the church at Kharoba-Koshuk was probably built in the fifth-sixth centuries and was functioning until the eleventh-twelfth centuries.⁴⁵⁷ The building was built from mud-bricks and had a definite rectangular shape (51 metres long and 13 metres wide). It consisted of one nave, divided into six spans of different lengths. The apse was located in the southeast, and was preceded by a room, which probably had a domed roof.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵¹ FINSTER & SCHMIDT, 1976.

⁴⁵² FINSTER & SCHMIDT, 1976, pp. 30.

⁴⁵³ FINSTER & SCHMIDT, 1976, pp. 35.

⁴⁵⁴ FINSTER & SCHMIDT, 1976, pp. 42, Fig 13. The authors suggested that the subsidiary rooms functioned as a martyrion, hermitage, or both.

⁴⁵⁵ FINSTER & SCHMIDT, 1976, pp. 43.

⁴⁵⁶ Kharoba-Koshuk is located 15 kilometres to the north of Marv, along the ancient road, next to a fortified hill known as Due Chakyn. For a study of this monument see PUGANCHEKOVA, 1954. Recently, PUSCHNIG, 1999, pp. 80-81, on the basis of a study of ceramics and bricks, has offered a new date for this monument; the 11th-12th century. However, as NAYMARK, 2001, pp. 299 has demonstrated, this suggested later date is not convincing, especially in light of surface numismatic evidence (coins of Hormizd II (579-590 CE)).

⁴⁵⁷ PUGACHENKOVA, 1958, pp. 126-130.

⁴⁵⁸ PUGACHENKOVA, 1958, pp. 128.

In Semirechye, Church of the East architecture is exemplified by two unique church complexes excavated at the site of Aq-Beshim.⁴⁵⁹ The second church complex excavated at Aq-Beshim, ('building VIII') was built in the south-eastern corner of the city within the city walls and consisted of three or possibly four sections. Each section was in turn divided into long rooms (hallways) of 25 metres, stretching from east to west. The 'long halls' in the east end were adjoined by smaller square structures (5 by 5 metre) furnished with niches (altars?). Along the eastern facade of the building there were a number of additional rooms located between the rooms with altars. Judging from its size, Aq-Beshim 'building VIII' was built in three stages, but with little chronological difference. The squared cross-shaped rooms were covered by a dome and the hallways were arched. This is similar to the features of Aq-Beshim 'building IV'.⁴⁶⁰

Origins and regional characteristics of Church of the East architecture

The majority of the examples described above are believed to originate from either the model of existing large halls, such as royal halls or palaces, which were built in the *ivan* style - a house with three chambers opening out into a hall or courtyard; or from the model of Jewish and Babylonian temples, as exemplified by the church buildings unearthed at Hira. This architectural model is distinguished by the square chamber in the eastern end that was accessed via a narrow passage.⁴⁶¹ This chamber at the eastern end was a separate section within the church proper; linked to the western part, where laity and worshipers stood.⁴⁶²

In Central Asian Christian architecture, as noted by Veronika Voronina, especially with regards to the church at Kharoba-Koshuk and building IV at Aq-Beshim, the main distinguishing feature was the walled open yard. Voronina pointed out particularly that: "unlike the long churches of Ctesiphon; churches in Central Asia represent a special type

⁴⁵⁹ KYZLASOV, 1959b, pp.155-227; SEMENOV, 2002a, pp. 4-10 provides a comprehensive survey of the history of research in Aq-Beshim. SEMENOV & TASHBAEVA, 1997, pp. 48-51; SEMENOV, 2002b, pp. 11-115 is a detailed archaeological study of the second church complex unearthed at Aq-Beshim.

⁴⁶⁰ SEMENOV & TASHBAEVA, 1997, pp. 48-51.

⁴⁶¹ ĀYATOLLĀHĪ, 2003, pp. 96-98 has argued that the *ivan* was the original feature of Eastern Iranian architecture, spread under the Parthians and later developed under the Sassanids in Western Iran, which then became a distinguishing architectural feature of Persian architecture. OKADA, 1991, pp.81 pointed out that "for Syrian churches there is an hypothetical view that firstly appeared a kind of house church with courtyard, as exemplified by the renown remains disclosed at Dura Europos, and subsequently a primitive single-aisled chapel entered from the portico and the longer side as is seen in the case with Qirk Bizzze. These two, however, seem to have developed from different styles of local house from the outset, even though the dates of two are far apart."

⁴⁶² RICE, 1932b, pp. 276-291; a discussion on the similarity of Babylonian temple structure and the church at Hira is found in pages 279-280. RICE, 1934, pp. 54-73. Most recently, THIERRY, 1993, pp. 179-204 in his description of the church remains in 'Upper Mesopotamia' refer to this architectural type (the square chamber at the east-end accessed by a narrow passage) as being of the *cella* type of church architecture.

where the nave is replaced with an open yard.”⁴⁶³ In her opinion, this feature is the local characteristic of church architecture that developed in the Central Asian region.

Contrary to Voronina’s opinion, discussing the architectural peculiarities of the church buildings in Central Asia, specifically at Kharoba-Koshuk, Khmel’nitskiĭ agrees with Pugachenkova that the church at Kharoba-Koshuk was built on the model of the ‘long churches’ of Ctesiphon. According to Khmel’nitskiĭ, “even closer architectural analogies [to Kharoba-Koshuk] are represented by the churches in South Syria”.⁴⁶⁴ As for the Aq-Beshim ‘building IV’, he opined that only the square chamber with an altar, located in the eastern end of the structure, can be designated as the church proper; whilst the open courtyard was “an extensive threshold – in Western terminology, an atrium or narthex”,⁴⁶⁵ concluding that:

“the church-chapel, its squared plan with axial niches and vaulted dome, belongs to the ancient and indigenous architectural methods of Central Asia; a method which later was translated into monumental forms of Islamic sacred and civil buildings.”⁴⁶⁶

Leonid Kyzlasov, commenting on the architectural format of Aq-Beshim ‘building IV’ (which he excavated himself) opined that it “represents cultural syncretism, which is reflected in combined architectural methods of the Syria (cross-shaped plan covered by dome) and Central Asia (an open court yard with porticos along the perimeter).”⁴⁶⁷ Thus, contrary to Khmel’nitskiĭ’s view that attributed the ‘entire’ architectural model of Aq-Beshim (squared cross-shaped plan with dome and open courtyard) to the Central Asian architectural tradition, Kyzlasov described only the open courtyard as being in the Central Asian architectural style specifically adopted in construction of church buildings.⁴⁶⁸ According to Kyzlasov’s interpretation (similar to Voronina), the open courtyard at Aq-Beshim building IV functioned as an open-roofed nave. The same feature, an open courtyard, is observed in the Aq-Beshim ‘building VIII’, excavated in 1996-1997.⁴⁶⁹

Regarding the distinctiveness and regional characteristics of Church of the East architecture, The above mentioned views on the characteristics of the Church of the East architecture can

⁴⁶³ VORONINA, 1960, pp. 54. The architectural feature of having a ‘nave replace by an open yard’ is attested to in Kharoba-Koshuk and in both building IV and building VIII at Aq-Beshim.

⁴⁶⁴ KHMEL’NITSKIĬ, 2000, pp. 243. In particular, the church at Kharoba-Koshuk, in its ground plan, demonstrates great similarity with the Church of the East architecture of the Rahiliya, located 110 km southwest of Baghdad and Qusair, near Kerbala. These churches (one at Rahiliya and two at Qusair) are unique in their long naves, which are in excess of 30 meters. For further details, see FINSTER & SCHMIDT, 1976. For an architectural cross-examination of the churches in north and south Iraq see OKADA, 1991, pp.71-83.

⁴⁶⁵ KHMEL’NITSKIĬ, 2000, pp. 245.

⁴⁶⁶ KHMEL’NITSKIĬ, 2000, pp. 245.

⁴⁶⁷ KYZLASOV, 1959b, pp. 238.

⁴⁶⁸ KYZLASOV, 1959, pp. 233.

⁴⁶⁹ SEMENOV, 2002.

be summarised in Yasuyoshi Okada's words about the church architectures known in Iraq that :

“the churches in Iraq, especially in the southern region, though not so many, represent the notable architectural phenomenon in the time around the Muslim conquest, that various factors and elements, both native alien, skilfully composed not in one way a new category of architecture, neither Sasanian nor Islamic.”⁴⁷⁰

The Urgut church in the context of Church of the East architecture

The description above presents fourteen up to date, documented examples of Church of the East architecture from Mesopotamia, the Persian Gulf region and Central Asia. Of course, this is a small number of specimens from which to draw conclusive suggestions. However, by considering their shared architectural characteristics, it is possible to make some observations about their relationship and significance.

In relationship to the above-described churches, the Urgut church shows common features in four main aspects:

1. General architectural outline/model: the layout of the Urgut church is rectangular, and two-naved, divided by a *bema* situated in the middle.⁴⁷¹ The doorways are located along the length of the walls.

A particular feature in the layout of the Urgut church which is distinct from other the examples mentioned here is a separate kitchen and dining hall, both located to the north. According to Savchenko, the dining hall had the “same proportions [as the naves] and the altar-like structure in the eastern end” but lacks other liturgical furnishings present in the northern and southern naves.⁴⁷² This dining hall was separated by a solid wall and was accessed from the sanctuary (by one doorway) and the northern nave (by two doorways) and possibly from the oratorium, located behind the sanctuary. There was also a door from the kitchen opening into this dining hall. If the outline of this particular section is turned by 180 degrees, than the Urgut church looks like a three-nave church where the sanctuary is flanked by *pastophoria*. The main nave is divided into two aisles by the *bema* and the other nave is separated by

⁴⁷⁰ OKADA, 1991, pp. 71-83.

⁴⁷¹ It is worth mentioning that cases of *bema* acting as a barrier or partition of the naves is observed mostly in the churches of north Syria, such as a small church at Qirq Bizah, located near Qalb Lozeh in Syria. Another example where the *bema* is so large that it forms a barrier across the front (eastern) half of the nave is that of the church in Resafa. For further details, see LOOSLEY, 2003, pp. 42-45, 53.

⁴⁷² SAVCHENKO, 2007, Excavations in Urgut: June - July 2007; Progress Report at http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/projekt_2.htm#2007 (accessed on 16-06-2011).

the solid wall. This feature, i.e. separation of the naves by the solid wall, is present in several of the churches mentioned earlier, such as Ain Sha'ia. The presence of the kitchen at the western end suggests that the Eucharist bread may have been baked there, in which case this room did not serve as a general kitchen, but as a *prothesis*, a liturgical chamber. The presence of the doorways also indicates that this refectory was possibly a nave, in particular since it was also accessed from the sanctuary.

2. Construction materials: In the churches discussed, the building materials generally vary by region. However, the majority of the churches are built from mud and fired bricks. The Urgut church was also constructed from a mixture of fired and mud brick.
3. Liturgical architectural features: namely a sanctuary located at the east end, flanked by *pastophoria*. In the Urgut church the Eucharist bread was probably prepared in the kitchen located at the western end of the refectory. To the north of the sanctuary there was one room, which probably served as a *diaconicon*. In its immediate Central Asian context, the Urgut church is unique in that it included a *bema*, absent in the other churches, including those at Aq-Beshim and Kharoba-Koshuk.
4. Interior décor: In contrast with the Mesopotamian and Gulf churches, no monumental elements of décor, such as a cross plaques or other ornamented detail, have been found at the Urgut church. However, a ceramic tile with a cross impression, found in the nave in the niche at the eastern wall, suggests that at least parts of the church were decorated by such decorative tiles. Furthermore, the presence of fragments of coloured stucco also indicates that the walls were decorated with some sort of mural, which has not survived. In this connection, it is noteworthy that a cross plaque, a tile bearing an impression of the cross, is known from Marv. Although the exact archaeological context of this evidence is obscure, its use on the decor of churches is certain.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷³ PILIPKO, 1968, pp.25



Figure 34: Fragment of ceramic tile with the impression of the cross reproduced after Savchenko

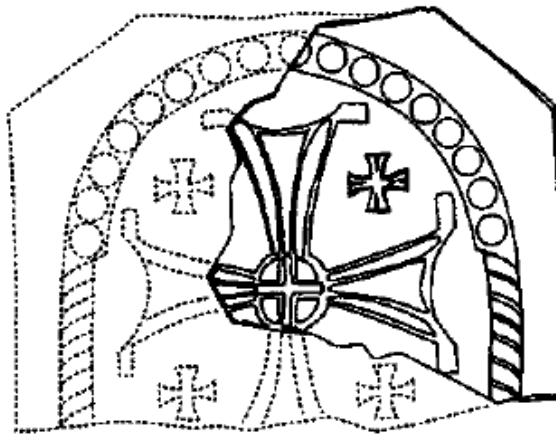


Figure 35: cross plaque from Marv reproduced after Pilipko, 1968

The Urgut church: monastic or parochial

The Urgut church has, to date, been perceived to be a monastic church or even a monastery.

In particular, the concluding remark of the archaeological reports on the Urgut church reads:

“after careful considerations, it has been decided by the project leader, Dr. Alexei Savchenko, and the Society for the Exploration of EurAsia to conclude the fieldwork at Urgut since the project's objective, set in early 2004, has been fully achieved with the discovery and excavation of the Christian church and monastery belonging to the Church of the East mentioned by the 10th century geographer and historian Ibn Hawqal.”⁴⁷⁴

However, this conclusion needs to be reviewed and reconsidered.

The designation of the excavated edifice as a ‘Christian church and monastery’ is based on Ibn Hawqal’s description, particularly his use of the words *عُمَرَا* [*umra*] and *قِلَائِيَات* [*qillāyāt*].

Savchenko translated the first word, *‘umra*, as ‘monastery’, and in the footnote he described

⁴⁷⁴ http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/projekt_2.htm#2007

it as a “calque from the Syriac **ܩܠܝܐܬܐ** instead of the Arabic [دير]”.⁴⁷⁵ The word *qillāyāt*, translated as ‘cell’, in both Syriac (**ܩܠܝܐܬܐ**) and Arabic denotes the sense ‘small in size’ i.e. an alcove, a recess, a recessed portion of a room or a monk's cell.⁴⁷⁶ Thus, Savchenko translates the passage as follows: “On Sāwdār [there is] a monastery of the Christians where they gather and have their cells.”⁴⁷⁷ However, judging by its ground plan, the excavated Urgut Church can be firmly designated a church i.e. a gathering place, which in Ibn Hawqal’s passage is signified by the word **مجمع** [*majm‘a*].⁴⁷⁸

In Arabic, *majm‘a* could mean gathering in the sense of a place i.e. church building or monastery; or in the sense of a gathering of people i.e. assembly. In Ibn Hawqal’s passage, the word *majm‘a* relates to the word ‘*umra*’; thus it can be understood that the author uses the word ‘*umra*’ in the sense of building, qualified by *majm‘a*, implying ‘assembly place’ i.e. church building. Accordingly, Ibn Hawqal perhaps uses the word ‘*umra*’ with its Arabic semantics i.e. building, and therefore, it may not bear the Syriac connotation of ‘monastery’. In addition, within the excavated area, no traces of additional structures that may have been used for habitation, i.e. cells (*qillāyāt*) have been found to support the designation of the Urgut church as a monastery or a church located in a monastic setting.

One could justify the absence of cells (*qillāyāt*) in the excavated edifice by suggesting that Ibn Hawqal was either referring to another complex that comprised a separate assembly place (church) or habitations (cells), or to a few caves located in a mountain nearby the excavated church.

The first option, that Ibn Hawqal was describing a different monument, is very unlikely. As Savchenko himself points out “neither the available data nor common sense allow that in the Urgut area (i.e. the Shawdar mountains in the south of Samarkand) there once were two Christian monasteries, one described by the Arab geographers, and the other unnoticed.”⁴⁷⁹

The second option, namely that by *qillāyāt*, Ibn Hawqal meant the caves located nearby, equally does not find corroborative material justification. The so-called ‘monastic’ caves of

⁴⁷⁵ SAVCHENKO, 1996, pp.337. The Syriac word **ܩܠܝܐܬܐ** stems from the root **ܩܠܝܐ** meaning ‘living in the sense of dwelling, inhabiting’ and could signify either an abstract or objective meaning, e.g. a space occupied by a monastery, inhabited by monks; or a monastic life- a lifestyle followed by monks. (SMITH, 1903, pp.405). The word in Arabic means “a land or house inhabited, peopled, well peopled, well stocked with people and the like, in flourishing state, in a state the contrary of desolate or waste or ruined” as well as “a structure; an edifice; or perhaps the act of building.” (LANE, 1863, pp. 2155-2156).

⁴⁷⁶ The dictionary entry for this word includes its application as the designation of the Patriarch's residence.

⁴⁷⁷ SAVCHENKO, 1996, pp. 333 Compare the Arabic text DE GOEJE, 1927, pp. 372, “*Wa bi'l-sawdār ‘umra li'l-naṣārī fīhi majm‘a lahum. Wa lahum fīhi qillāyāt*”.

⁴⁷⁸ SAVCHENKO, 1996, pp. 333 translated **مجمع** as ‘they gather’.

⁴⁷⁹ SAVCHENKO, 2005b, pp. 555.

Urgut were brought to the attention of scholars in 1920 when a collection of Syriac inscriptions on the mountain wall at Urgut was observed.⁴⁸⁰ They are located at about a 20-30 minute walk from the location of the Urgut church and not all of them are easily accessible.⁴⁸¹ According to Mark Dickens' recent survey:

“Cave 1 is accessed by a narrow opening in the rock face and provides just enough room to stand up in and cave 2 is actually a small grotto which could provide one person with a very cramped place to shelter from the elements. Cave 3, the highest, is inaccessible without climbing ropes for all but the most seasoned rock-climbers.”⁴⁸²

Previous surveys, including that of Dickens, have not recorded these caves comprehensively, not providing exact measurements of the height, depth or internal structure of these caves. Hence, the specific, detailed outlines of the caves are not known. However, it appears that these caves were not monastic in the sense of a monastic habitat. At most, they could be described as overhangs or small holes, approximately 4-5 feet wide in the opening and 2-3 feet deep. These caves have possibly emerged as the result of two large rocks that have fallen together or a rock falling off, and are very narrow. In personal discussion, Dickens affirmed that judging by their overall shape and size, these caves could, at most, accommodate 1 or 2 persons at a time.⁴⁸³ Thus, they could only be useful for temporary shelter and there is no evidence showing their use as a dwelling by monks.

However, these caves may well be understood as places used for short stops.

In the passage under discussion, Ibn Hawqal also mentions the word وقوف [*wuqūf*].⁴⁸⁴ Savchenko has translated this “inalienable properties” i.e. ‘endowment lands’.⁴⁸⁵ The word *wuqūf* (as a verbal noun) means to pause, stop walking, or stand up i.e. stop. Considering the context in which Ibn Hawqal uses this word, namely the natural conditions of Urgut (solitude, a healthy climate) it is possible to assert that *wuqūf* means a stopping place; a place used for retreat and stoppage, as opposed to its being the plural of *waqf* – endowment land. Thus, it is

⁴⁸⁰ As pointed out by SAVCHENKO, 1996, pp. 334, these inscriptions were observed in 1920 by a group of students from Turkestan Oriental Institute, who made a wax offprint of some of them. These inscriptions were then reported by BARTHOLD, 1966a, pp. 258-259 (who visited Central Asia between 1916 and 1920). This resulted in the misunderstanding that Barthold had discovered them. The site where these inscription are located were subsequently visited in 1938 during which two samples were sawed off and given to the museum. In 1981, the site was surveyed by both archaeologists and Syriac language experts, resulting in a short publication by MESHERSKAYA, & PAYKOVA, 1981, pp. 109-110.

⁴⁸¹ A discussion of these caves can be found in SAVCHENKO, 1996, pp. 333-54; *ibid.*, 2005, pp. 333-338; *ibid.*, 2006, pp. 551-555; SAVCHENKO & DICKENS, 2009, pp. 121-302; SAVCHENKO, 2010, pp. 74-82.

⁴⁸² Dickens, forthcoming (a).

⁴⁸³ Mark Dickens, personal communication. Email 28.12.2011.

⁴⁸⁴ For the Arabic text see DE GOEJE, 1927, pp. 372.

⁴⁸⁵ SAVCHENKO, 1996, p. 333.

possible that by the word *wuqūf*, Ibn Hawqal refers to these caves, which monks used for holding vigils, or travellers to pause from their journey.

Furthermore, the fact that these caves were used for short-stay or stoppage is supported by the content of the inscriptions found in these caves; in particular, the use of the word vigil in connection with a personal name on several occasions, e.g. ܒܪܫܒܒܐ “Baršabbā kept vigil/stayed the night”.⁴⁸⁶ The Syriac word for vigil is ܠܝܠܐ, which stems from the verbal root ܠܐܠ meaning ‘to pass the night, remain all night’.⁴⁸⁷ This can be also recalled as support for the fact these caves were used for overnight stays at the most.

The inscriptions found in the Urgut caves are very short phrases and personal names (a total of 51 names) followed by the sign of the cross. In addition to the inscription noted in 1920, a recent survey by Dickens has identified more inscriptions:

“the inscriptions can be divided into five locations: Cave 1, Cave 2, Cave 3, the lower cliff face and the upper cliff face, where a small inscription-covered grotto is located. There are also two inscriptions that were sawed off the cliff by A. Y. Kaplunov of the Samarkand Museum of History, Culture and Art in 1936 and taken back to the Museum, where they reside to this day.”⁴⁸⁸

Both the proximity of location and the content of the inscriptions found in these caves indicate that Christians living in the Urgut region, as well as those who emigrated there from Iraq, as shown by Ibn Hawqal, were familiar with these caves. Although available evidence reflects traces of human activity in them, indicated by Syriac inscriptions on their walls, no other types of material evidence have been found to support the idea that they were used as monastic habitations. No traces of food, fire or intentional adjustment of space has been recorded. The possibility that they were used as temporary vigil stations or retreat spaces may also be argued on the basis of the content and size of the inscriptions, which are often short and mention words such as vigil, and prayer.

A further point to be made is that the designation of the Urgut church as a ‘Christian church and monastery’ does not find support in comparison with parallel examples of the monastic complexes of the Church of the East, about which Ibn Hawqal may well have been informed. Three particular sites to name that were either founded or flourishing contemporaneous with the Urgut church are:

⁴⁸⁶ DICKENS, forthcoming (a). Thus the inscription in the upper cliff of the Cave 3. Another inscription from the same cave has ‘Vigil with Yuhannan’.

⁴⁸⁷ SMITH, p. 40.

⁴⁸⁸ DICKENS, forthcoming (a). The image of the inscription housed at Samarqand Museum is found in SAVCHENKO, 1996, p. 335, Fig. 1.

- a. The monastery at Kharg Island excavated in 1960 that represents a rare example of the capacious coenobitic institutions of its period. It consisted of seventy cells around a courtyard, and a church. Furthermore, there were satellite settlements discovered in its proximity, which also belonged to and were used by either the Christian community living on the monastic site, or those living elsewhere on the island.⁴⁸⁹ The communal gathering place of this monastic community was probably a church that was richly decorated with stucco reliefs analogous to those known from churches in Sīr Banī Yās and Jubail.
- b. The monastery at Sīr Banī Yās; a site located to the south, off the coast of the modern United Arab Emirates.⁴⁹⁰ The size of this site is more modest than the coenobium discovered at Kharg (eight cells were excavated, and in total there might have been thirty to forty cells). However, its design (the arrangement of cells and satellite settlements around the church building) is analogous to the overall plan of the monastery at Kharg.⁴⁹¹
- c. The monastery at Ain Sha'ia, which forms the most direct parallel, was located in the fortified complex, which included a three-aisled church.⁴⁹² The so-called Dukakin caves examined in proximity of the Ain Sha'ia appear to have been intentionally dug and modified into dwellings by monks. Traces of habitation of these caves by a monastic community include epigraphic finds.⁴⁹³ Based on their design (the size of the rooms, the passages interconnecting the caves, and their plastered interior), these caves are believed to have been in use long before their adaptation by a Christian community at Ain Sha'ia, functioning either as dwellings or for other purposes.

The above examples show that most of the monastic complexes of the Church of the East followed a similar pattern, i.e. a church building for gathering, a monastic settlement for coenobitic and caves for solitary monks. Placing the Urgut church into this extended framework of the monastic and ecclesiastical architecture of the Church of the East brings up

⁴⁸⁹ GHIRSHMAN, 1960. A recent detailed examination of the site is found in STEVE 2003, who bases his study on an assessment of pottery, thus suggesting a new date for both the site in Kharg and other monastic sites of the Gulf. CARTER, 2008, pp.71-108 also includes a useful survey of the Gulf churches, including a discussion on dating the known edifices.

⁴⁹⁰ KING, 1997, pp. 221-225; ELDERS, 2001, pp.47-57.

⁴⁹¹ KING, 1997 (cells at pp. 224-225). The church building at Sīr Banī Yās was also decorated by stucco reliefs representing Christian imagery (vegetal and crosses).

⁴⁹² OKADA & NUMOTO, 1989, pp.35-61; *ibid*, 1991, pp. pp. 71-83.

⁴⁹³ MATSUMOTO, 1989, pp.81-88.

stark structural anomalies, in that it does not have all the architectural elements of a monastic complex.

It is possible to identify the caves located near the Urgut church as the habitat of anchorite monks, given that these solitary monks did not have any possessions and lived in extremely harsh conditions; and thus to see the caves as part of a monastic complex in Urgut. However, there really needs to be more compelling evidence to support this, similar to that recovered in the Dukakin Caves at the Ain Sha'ia monastic complex.

Another piece of evidence pointing to the parochial nature of the Urgut church is the liturgical architectural feature of the *bema*. Emma Loosley's recent study of architecture of the *bema*, focusing on the churches of north-western Syria, has established that in Syria the *bema* was not used in monastic churches.⁴⁹⁴

The excavations of church buildings of the Church of the East tradition that were part of monastic complexes, such as Sīr Banī Yās, and the churches on Kharg island and at Ain Sha'ia, did not reveal the presence of *bema* either.⁴⁹⁵ Among the currently known Church of the East church buildings, the *bema* is known only in the three-nave church (designated Church XI) excavated at Hira. The naves in the church were divided by four pairs of detached columns. There was a barrier extending north-south across all three naves, which, at the second pair of columns from the west, divided the western two-fifths of the naves from the eastern nave. The *bema* was positioned east of this barrier in the space occupying the central nave towards the eastern end. The *bema* walls in the north and south curved outward and contained benches.⁴⁹⁶ The only other church building of the Church of the East tradition in which the *bema* was found is the church discovered at Jubail, on the Persian Gulf coast of Saudi Arabia.⁴⁹⁷

Extant evidence may be understood to suggest that in the Church of the East tradition the *bema* was used only in congregational churches: in community churches, the reading of scriptures and the sermon required a *bema*. Accordingly, one possible conclusion that arises is that the Urgut church was an ordinary parish church serving a sizable community in the Urgut region of Sogdiana. There may have been coenobitic monks among the populace who used the solitary environment for retreats or vigils; however there is no compelling evidence to support the designation of the Urgut church as a monastic church.

⁴⁹⁴ LOOSLEY, 2003, pp.43-44.

⁴⁹⁵ A discussion of the *bema* in the East Syriac church in relation to both liturgical texts and archaeological material is found in CASSIS, 2002, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁹⁶ RICE, 1932, pp. 280.

⁴⁹⁷ A detailed discussion and assessment is found in LANGFELDT, 1994, pp. 33-60.

Furthermore, Loosely pointed out that among Syrian churches, only one *bemata* church per village is known, and that these churches were used for holding communal services.⁴⁹⁸

In this light, the Urgut church can be identified as a community church. Of course, this does not imply that among the Christian community living at Urgut there were no monks or that the monastic tradition was not known in Sogdiana. The argument here is concerned only with the hermeneutic context of the Urgut church, and is more suggestive than conclusive. The possibility that there was a monastery similar to that of Ain Sha'ia, which has not survived or been excavated to date must be considered. Thus the suggested position will be reviewed if such evidence surfaces.

Urgut church: a symbol of patronage

The fundamental link of the architectural evidence with its socio-cultural and economic environment is through the themes of patronage and dialogue.

Both patronage and dialogue are represented in church architecture by architectural form and typology (whether domestic architectural form, or official public-political form), and construction quality (construction material, size, the environmental setting).

As Richard Krautheimer observed, in the Roman Empire, the layout of church architecture, which had an architectural vocabulary of the highest public order, emerged subsequent to Constantine's conversion and therefore signified an imperial patronage.⁴⁹⁹ Consequently, in the Roman Empire and in those regions which were influenced by Greco-Roman culture (e.g. northern Syria, Alexandria), churches were built following the architecture of the basilica - a Roman public building usually functioning as an administrative building for court hearings and public meetings, with a rectangular apsidal hall. Outside the Roman Empire, as exhibited by the Church of the East architecture found in Mesopotamia proper, i.e. East of the Euphrates at Ctesiphon and in the western flank of Hira, as well as down the Gulf and further afield in the eastern extremities of the Sassanid Empire, at the Marv oasis and in the Semirechye region *en route* to China, it was the *ivan* architecture, used for both official and domestic buildings, that provided inspiration.

Furthermore, it is not only the form of the architecture that indicates patronage but the very fact of its existence. Christian architecture, like other forms of architecture, is a product of the dedication of economic resources available to either individuals or the state. Thus, in the

⁴⁹⁸ LOOSLEY, 2003, pp.43-44.

⁴⁹⁹ KRAUTHEIMER, 1965.

construction of religious buildings such as a church or monastery, the role of patrons, either lay or political, such as local rulers, was significant. As such, church buildings symbolize those who dedicate resources in their construction.

Although in the existing historiography no direct records concerning the patronage of Christian architecture in Sogdiana have survived, possible parallelisms can be drawn from examples from Iran proper, Mesopotamia and Marv. For example, the Sogdian translation of the Life of Baršabbā discusses Baršabbā's involvement in building churches and monasteries in Marv and its environs under the patronage of the Persian queen. One could also include the example of the reconstruction and rebuilding of the Great Church of Seleucia twice with financial endowments from the state. First "Catholicos Yahwalaba I (415-420) rebuilt it under king Yazdegerd I with money given by Theoddsius II; the second time, catholicos Mar Aba (540-551) enlarged it using the subsidies given by 'Abd al-Massih of Hira."⁵⁰⁰

In a similar manner, one may surmise that the Sogdian church might also have benefited from some sort of patronage. The numismatic evidence shows at least that there were some, all be they unknown, Sogdian rulers who identified with the Christian faith and who might possibly have been patrons of the Sogdian church.

Small material culture objects

This section introduces the material culture objects that were either discovered at archaeological sites such as the Urgut church, or acquired in the area of Sogdiana as a whole.

a) Objects discovered during the excavation of the Urgut church

The electronic reports of the excavation of the Urgut church contain a few samples of material culture objects that were discovered at the site or acquired from local residents in the course of excavations. The description of the objects is limited, indicating only the approximate dating of the object and its specification e.g. a glazed ceramic oil lantern from the thirteenth century, or a fragment of a plate bearing an impression of the cross.

⁵⁰⁰ FIEY, 1967, pp. 17-18.



Figure 36: Objects found in the 2004 excavation season (oil lantern from ca. 13 CE and metallic pendant cross). Reproduced after Savchenko



Figure 37: Objects found in the 2005 excavation season. From left to right: 1. Fragment of plate with a seal impression of the cross; and 2. Fragment of a ceramic plate kept in a niche. Reproduced after Savchenko

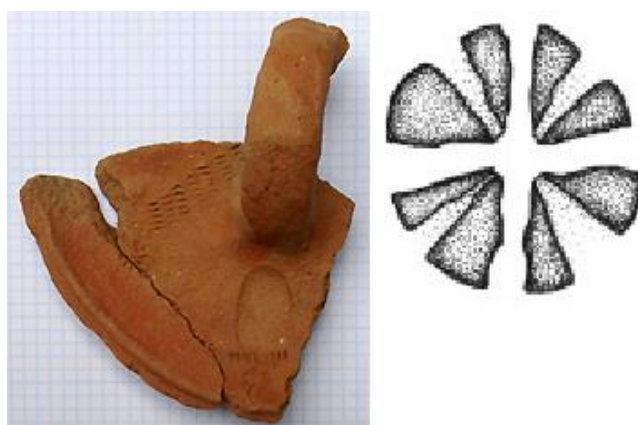


Figure 38: A fragment of a lid of a ceramic vessel with an offprint of a cross-shaped stamp, thumb-print and a decorative pattern of several rows of notches. The pattern on the ceramic fragment (enlarged). From the 2006 excavation season. Reproduced after Savchenko

During the excavation of the Urgut church, objects were also acquired from local residents, such as a ceramic jar featuring an appliqué cross and incised ornamental writing imitating

Syriac was acquired from local residents Kutbiya Rafiyeva and Aziza Haydarova.⁵⁰¹ The jar was reportedly discovered some sixty years ago in suburb of Urgut in a village named Gus-soy.⁵⁰² Lacking any archaeological context, it is difficult to determine the application of this object; that is, whether it was among the liturgical items of the church or used otherwise.⁵⁰³ In addition, a pendant bronze cross also was acquired that was given to the Samarqand historical museum. The cross appears to be equilateral with flared arms; the upper part of the cross where there was a loop for hanging is broken.⁵⁰⁴ From the iconographic perspective the pendant crosses acquired from Urgut, including the other crosses mentioned below, resemble the conventional typology of crosses known in Central Asia.⁵⁰⁵



Figure 39: Ceramic jar from Urgut, reproduced after Savchenko

⁵⁰¹SAVCHENKO, 2005, Excavations in Urgut: August-October 2005; Progress Report at http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/projekt_2.htm#2005 accessed on 16-06-2011) According to the report the owners agreed to donate the object to Samarqand museum.

⁵⁰² SAVCHENKO, 2005, Excavations in Urgut: August-October 2005; Progress Report at http://www.exploration-eurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/projekt_2.htm#2005 accessed on 16-06-2011)

⁵⁰³ From the Panjikent excavations there are a group of items of pottery known that had crosses applied using red agnobe. On the semantics of the use of the cross on various objects of material culture from Central Asia, KUKHARENKO & MALTCEV, 1988 opined that this practice was introduced by Christians who used the symbol of the cross for marking their property, as a protective symbol. On the other hand, a glazed plate of the 11th century from Khujand published by BELYAEVA, 1994, pp.79-81 is undoubtedly of Christian provenance. It has a stylised Arabic inscription in the shape of the letter taw, read as *‘Īsā Maryam* - ‘Jesus and Mary’.

⁵⁰⁴SAVCHENKO, 2006, The excavation report of 2006, at http://www.explorationeurasia.com/EurAsia/inhalt_english/projekt_2.htm#2006 (accessed on 16-06-2011)

⁵⁰⁵ A relevant discussion is found in KLEIN & RECK, 2004, pp. 147-156, where the author, in connection with a pendant cross bearing a Sogdian inscription that was discovered at Aq-Beshim, also examines comparable available evidence.



Figure 40: Pendant cross acquired from a private collector by the East Sogdian Archaeological Expedition; now housed at Samarqand museum. Image© Savchenko

b) Objects acquired in Sogdiana

Bronze censer

According to the acquisition records (book 7824, page 104-5) of the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, the Syrian bronze censer was bought in August 20, 1916 from Davud Mirzo Mahdi Yusupov, a merchant from Samarqand, who claimed that the object was found in the same year in the Urgut area. Currently housed at the State Hermitage Museum (CA 12758), it was first published by V. Zalesskaya in 1972 and re-assessed by G. Dresvyanskaya in 1995.⁵⁰⁶ The censer has also been mentioned in many other works related to the history of Christianity in Central Asia.⁵⁰⁷

Description of the censer

The censer is made of bronze by a casting technique, and has a hemispherical shape. The body of the censer is decorated with six crudely executed New Testament episodes (the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Baptism, the Crucifixion, and the Women at the Tomb). The human figures of the episodes differ in their proportions, and are delineated by metal lines cut deeply into the surface, and appear to be made up of individual spherical surfaces. Their facial features, due to the poor execution, are hardly identifiable.

These six episodes are framed by decorative stripes; at the top are two bands: one includes a three-leaf rosette; the border underneath is filled with concentric arches closely adjacent to each other. At the bottom (from the legs toward the body), is a band consisting of triangles with triangles inside them; the insides of the triangles on the upper line is filled with dotted

⁵⁰⁶ ZALESSKAYA, 1972, pp. 57-60; DRESVYANSKAYA, 1995, pp. 57-60.

⁵⁰⁷ NIKITIN, 1984, pp.121-137; BOGOMOLOV *et al*, 1994, pp.6-18.

lines, and those on the lower line with large circles. The censer has conical legs decorated with engraved ornaments made of stylized plant shoots. The base of the censer has an equilateral cross in high relief, and appears to be decorated by large ‘beads’ in each arm. The upper rim of the censer was pierced by three holes through which chains were pulled, and there are three tabs between them.



Figure 41: Syrian bronze censer from Urgut, images reproduced after Zalesskaya, 1972 and Savchenko, 2005

Dating of the censer

Referring to several studies on censers of similar design held at the State Hermitage Museum and elsewhere in Europe, Zalesskaya points out that nearly all of them are considered to be of Syrian-Palestinian origin and datable to between the sixth and seventh centuries.⁵⁰⁸ On the basis of the close iconographic resemblance of the censer with censers of the sixth-seventh centuries known from Syria and Palestine, Zalesskaya identified the censer under discussion as being of the same provenance.⁵⁰⁹

The censer from Urgut, however, also displays certain decorative features, such as the division of the episodes by punctures, and triangles inside a triangle filled with dotted lines, which are unique to later chronology (seventh-ninth centuries CE). Accordingly, on the basis of comparison with iconographic features in known typology, Zalesskaya suggested that the Urgut censer belongs typologically to the group of censers that were produced in the eighth-ninth centuries; thus she considered it to be an imported object from Mesopotamia.⁵¹⁰

Almost three decades after the initial publication of the censer under discussion, Dresvyanskaya, based on very general observations, particularly regarding the manufacturing

⁵⁰⁸ ZALESSKAYA, 1972, pp. 57.

⁵⁰⁹ ZALESSKAYA, 1972, pp. 57.

⁵¹⁰ ZALESSKAYA, 1972, pp. 59. With reference to Barthold, the author particularly highlights that this period was the height of missionary activity in the region and coincided with the patriarchate of Timothy I.

technique and artistic quality of the Urgut censer, suggested that it was not imported, but manufactured *in situ* by local artisans.⁵¹¹

She considered that the dense ornamentation of the censer was intended to compensate the poor quality of the cast.⁵¹² Further, Dresvyanskaya argued that Zaleskaya's proposed date could be amended to one century earlier because, although the tenth-eleventh centuries (close to the date suggested by Zaleskaya) saw the ultimate canonization of the gospel episodes depicted in the censer, censers with such imagery were produced in large quantities from the sixth-seventh centuries onwards. However, Dresvyanskaya concluded that despite the possible artistic connections of the censer from Urgut with earlier known prototypes, it was manufactured around the end of twelfth or first half of the thirteenth centuries.⁵¹³

Dresvyanskaya's suggestion that the object was manufactured locally, in contrast with the first author's claim that it was a Mesopotamian import, seems very plausible, particularly given the fact that Sogdian masters of the early medieval period were renowned for their craftsmanship of silver and bronze articles.⁵¹⁴ However, her suggested dating is not satisfactory, especially when compared with the thorough assessment of Zaleskaya, who provided a comparative assessment of many more analogous censers, and a typology evolved within the chronology of the eighth and ninth centuries. Furthermore, if one were to accept the later dating (that is, to the twelfth-thirteenth centuries) one would expect more finds of similar object in the region, especially since the religious atmosphere in Sogdiana during the thirteenth century, under Mongol rule, was relatively relaxed.

St. Mina's ampulla

Like the abovementioned censer, the archaeological context of St. Mina's ampulla is unknown. The only background information provided in the acquisition records of The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg is that it was acquired in 1931. It is currently housed at the State Hermitage museum (CA 1514), and according to Boris Staviskiy, who published it in 1960, it was found at Afrāsiāb in Samarqand prior to 1920.⁵¹⁵

Description of the ampulla

The ceramic ampulla has an oval body and short cylindrical neck and two handles attached. It is 8.6 cm high and 1.8 cm thick. The diameter of the neck of the ampulla is 7 centimetres and

⁵¹¹ DRESVYANSKAYA, 1995, pp. 60.

⁵¹² DRESVYANSKAYA, 1995, pp. 58.

⁵¹³ DRESVYANSKAYA, 1995, pp. 60.

⁵¹⁴ For a survey of the subject and relevant literature see MARSHAK, 1971.

⁵¹⁵ STAVISKIY, 1960, pp. 101.

the stamped depiction is 4 centimetres in diameter. Its name derives from its main iconographic element; a stamped depiction of Abū Mīnā in a “canonical pose: standing with outstretched arms”.⁵¹⁶

Abū Mīnā, or St. Mina, is one of a number of martyr-wonderworker saints widely celebrated in both Eastern and Western Christianity.⁵¹⁷ The fame of Abū Mīnā among Christian communities of different regions is attested by the discovery of numerous small clay bottles (ampullae) on which his name and picture are engraved. The production place of Abū Mīnā ampullae was probably his monastery, located 45km southwest of Alexandria in Egypt, the remains of which were excavated in 1905-1907.⁵¹⁸ The ampullae were intended to hold the oil of lamps suspended above the saint's tomb, or holy water of the sanctuary of Abū Mīnā, and were kept piously by pilgrims.⁵¹⁹

Judging by the quantity of the surviving samples discovered at various places both in the saint's homeland, Egypt, and in other places in the Middle East e.g. Palestine, Syria, and in Turkey, Italy, France, Britain, the St. Mina's ampullae are probably the most prevalent surviving form of the pilgrim artefacts of the late antique and early medieval period (4th-9th centuries CE).⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁶ STAVISKIY, 1960, pp. 101.

⁵¹⁷ For primary sources on Abū Mīnā, see BUDGE, 1909; JARITZ, 1993. For a discussion of the Abū Mīnā ampullae found and currently held at various museums in Europe and elsewhere, see WITT, 2000.

⁵¹⁸ KAUFMAN, 1910.

⁵¹⁹ GROSSMAN, 1998, pp. 281-302, indicated that the shrine was located in an area identified as a large colonnaded square located north of the saint's basilica, which was also a commercial space where people traded various pilgrim artefacts. Archaeological finds of this object at the residential district of Kom-el-Dikka in Alexandria between 1961 and 1981, recorded by KISS, 1989, demonstrate its popularity also among Egyptian Christian communities. It was not, then, only part the commerce associated with pilgrims, but also had consumers in its local market. DAVIS, 1998, pp.303-339 observed that the local finds of this object indicate that prior to its becoming a long distance pilgrim object, the ampulla had become a local pilgrimage and religious identity object. There are also other types of pilgrim flasks known that are associated with other saints. For example, ANDERSON, 2004, pp.79-93, has provided a valuable study on pilgrim flasks found in Turkey that are very different from St. Mina's in their design and iconography.

⁵²⁰ A more recent comprehensive study on the distribution of St. Mina's ampullae, including references to relevant research, is found in ANDERSON, 2007, pp. 221-243.



Figure 42: St. Mina's ampulla, reproduced after Satviskiy, 1960

Dating of the ampulla

No exact date for the ampulla has been suggested, although such items were produced in large quantities at the monastery of Abū Mīnā between the fourth and seventh centuries.⁵²¹

Accordingly, this object might have come to Sogdiana anytime within this period or later.

The so-called pilgrim flask (as a type of ceramic vessel) is not completely foreign to the ceramic culture of Central Asia, including Persia and China. Similar objects, in different designs, forms, and functionality, are well known and discussed in art and archaeology scholarship on the region.⁵²² However, no other finds of St. Mina's ampullae in Sogdiana or Central Asia are known. Thus it is difficult to establish its definite context. Given that it has no major monetary value, being simple earthenware of no significant practical use, it is difficult to identify it as a commercial commodity that was bought by merchants.

A special link between the ampulla and Sogdian Christianity is suggested by ascetic Sogdian Christian texts related to the Egyptian church fathers. In this connection, it is possible to suggest that the ampulla was a holy souvenir that someone brought from Egypt.

⁵²¹ STAVISKIY, 1960, pp. 102.

⁵²² Although not directly concerned with pilgrim flasks, or with St. Mina's flask, FINLAY, 2010 is a very useful study. In particular, FINLAY, 2010, pp.300 points out that "[s]ilk road merchants took pilgrim flasks to Central Asia, where they became conflated with leather saddle flasks since the shapes are much alike. Persian earthenware and metallic flasks entered China in the Tang period, often bearing Hellenistic decoration, including acanthus patterns, dancing girls, and piping boys. Chinese artisans simulated the flask in porcelain, and, embellished with designs from Greece and Persia, they became prestige items as funerary goods in the Song period. In the Yuan and Ming periods, pilgrim flasks were made for export to Southwest Asia, often with Islamic-style floral decoration in the center. Comparable flasks made in the reigns of the Yongle and Xuande emperors [1402-1435] are decorated on both sides with brocade patterns, floral scrolls, and Southwest Asian geometric patterns." ANDERSON, 2004, pp.79-93 on the other hand, in discussing the example of local types of pilgrim flasks in Turkey, has shown that typologically and ichnographically they can be distinguished as either local or imported.

Christian crosses from Sogdiana⁵²³

In addition to the aforementioned metallic pendant cross found at the site of the Urgut church, and the bronze cross acquired from local residents, four more Christian crosses have been found in Sogdiana.

Pendant cross from Afrasiab

A bronze pectoral cross was found in 1946, as a surface find at the site of Afrāsiāb in Samarqand. It is believed to be from the sixth-seventh centuries, which Alexei Trenozhkin designated the Tali Barzu V period.⁵²⁴ In regards to its physical features, the Afrāsiāb cross is similar to the aforementioned bronze pendant cross acquired in Urgut.



Figure 43: Afrāsiāb bronze cross, drawing, reproduced after Trenozhkin

Pendant cross from burial site at Dashti-Urdakon, Panjikent

A bronze pectoral cross was discovered during the excavation of the burial site of Dashti-Urdakon, which contained burials of different types, including inhumation and burials in ossuaries.⁵²⁵ The burials by inhumation are identified as Christian. The cross was discovered in the tomb of a young child. The burial site where it was found is securely dated to the eighth century, based on an accompanying small object.

⁵²³ ROTT, 2006, pp. 395-401 provides a useful discussion on Christian crosses found in Central Asia, concluding that “crosses (of various functions) were found mostly in historical-cultural areas of Central Asia. If Sogdiana, Fergana and Čač are known only for sporadic finds, Semirechye has many more finds. The main part of the considered crosses is pectoral.... Their chronological range in Central Asia is determined presumably by the period from the 7th-14th centuries.” KLIMKEIT, 1979, pp. 99-115; KLEIN & ROTT, 2006, pp. 403-424 also provide a useful discussion on the symbolism, typology and functionality of the cross in the material culture of the Central Asian region.

⁵²⁴ A discussion of the periodization of the different cultural layers of Afrasiab and Samarqand, and their correlation with Qaunchi and Tali Barzu cultures is given in TRENNOZHNIKIN, 1950, pp. 152-169; specifically pp. 161, on the definition of the Tali Barzu V period; an image of the cross is found in pp. 166 nos. 2.

⁵²⁵ BELENICKIY, *et al*, 1977, pp. 559.

The Cross from the burial at Durmanteppa

The Durmen burial was excavated in 1986 in the Durmanteppa area in Samarqand, to which it owes its archaeological name.⁵²⁶ Three graves were opened by the archaeologists and only one had escaped the hands of ancient tomb robbers. The material culture objects of this grave included a cross of thin gold foil that was sewn on the garment of the deceased, who was buried in a wooden coffin of which only nails survive. Judging by the position of the skeletons, the burials were oriented in a westerly direction.⁵²⁷ The burial was reported to be from the middle of the eleventh century.⁵²⁸ Other accompanying artefacts from this burial include a sword and sheath.⁵²⁹ It is unlikely that the deceased held an ecclesiastical office, but most probably he was Christian holding a political, official post, an emissary perhaps. The cross in his clothing was most likely sewn in as a protective amulet. The involvement of Christians, in particular, members of the Church of the East, in the courtly and political sphere is a well-documented subject.



Figure 44: Golden cross from the Durmanteppa burial, reproduced after Savchenko & Dickens, 2009

A clay form for moulding crosses

A clay mould used to manufacture crosses was accidentally discovered at the site of Arbinjanteppa, located about 80 km to the west of Samarqand, on the road leading to Bukhara. This artefact is housed at the Institute of Archaeology in Samarqand.⁵³⁰ A ceramic mould for making crosses is also known from the archaeological excavations at Marv.⁵³¹ The type of

⁵²⁶ SHISHKINA, 1994, pp. 56-63.

⁵²⁷ SHISHKINA, 1994, pp. 56-57.

⁵²⁸ SHISHKINA, 1994, pp. 56-57.

⁵²⁹ The burial in Durmen is part of the larger burial site. In the course of the excavation of the site, a burial of a sacrificial horse was also found, a tradition of the animal husbandry cultures. In some graves, the attendant artifacts included cups and plates, which were used to provide food for the deceased. Accordingly, only one person in these group burial sites may be identified as Christian, whereas the religious identity of the remaining bodies cannot be confirmed for certain. Shishkina seems to have been incorrect in interpreting the burial as Christian, as the majority of the attendant objects contradict Christian burial practices.

⁵³⁰ SAVCHENKO & DICKENS, 2009, pp. 297, fig.6

⁵³¹ SIMPSON, 1993, pp.67-68. The mould is 1.5 cm and was made “by shaving down the edges of a ceramic jar strap handle and incising one surface to allow the simultaneous casting of two stylistically different pendant

metal used for molding crosses using this mould cannot be determined, but visually it can be paralleled with the cross acquired from Urgut and found in Afrāsiāb. In other words, ichnographically, the mould can be related to the crosses known in the art and archaeology of the Church of the East i.e. in Mesopotamia, Iran, Central Asia and China.



Figure 45: Mould for making crosses, reproduced after Savchenko, 2010

Sogdian material culture and Sogdian Christianity

Thomas Schlereth commented that “material culture objects made or modified by humans, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, reflect the belief patterns of individuals who made, commissioned, purchased, or used them, and by extension, the belief patterns of the larger society of which they are a part.”⁵³²

Applying this premise to the material culture described above, it is possible to say that these material objects reflect both the social actions of Sogdian Christians, and various patterns for the integration of Christianity into the Sogdian milieu.

a) Integration into landscape.

The material culture products discussed above belonged to a specific group i.e. to Christians. However, these material culture products also functioned in a wider cultural space; that is, they were produced in the workshop and purchased in the market; the church building stood alongside other private houses or along the main road. Although the introduction of this material culture into Sogdian society does not imply a radical shift in the material perception of Christianity, it does show that

crosses. One of these (1 x 1.9 cm.) appears to have a central leaf shape with small, plain equal-length arm crosses ("Greek crosses") at the terminals. The second was a cross (2.1 x 1.7 cm.) with equal-length, splayed arms, a pair of small blobs on the tip of each arm and a further five blobs on the cross itself." The form of the cross moulded in Marv would look mostly like the cross the acquired from Urgut or the one found in Afrasiab.

⁵³² SCHLERETH, 1982, pp.3.

Christianity was integrated into the public space through architecture and objects manufactured or sold in the workshops. Furthermore, it shows that Christianity was part of local religiosity. Christians in Sogdiana were able to own land to erect their churches, and to import or manufacture their objects of devotion.

b) Conformity with the international Church of the East.

One of the main characteristics of the material culture discussed above is its typological and iconographic commonality with the Christian material culture of the Church of the East tradition in Persia, Mesopotamia and Central Asia. Aside from being indicative of the influence trajectory in the development of this material culture, it also witnesses to an intrinsic relationship between the Christian communities living in Sogdiana and a much wider network of Christian communities.

Conclusion

Prior to its establishment in Sogdiana or elsewhere in the East, Christianity took root in the Mesopotamian borderlands of the Persian Empire; possibly under the Parthian Dynasty (247 BC- 224 CE). However, its centralization and organizational formation as a major religion took place under the Sassanid Dynasty (224-651 CE).⁵³³ The dissemination of Christianity in Persian is connected to, among other things (including trade and bilateral connections) the deportations, or forced migrations, carried out under Šāpūr I and Šāpūr II.⁵³⁴ This means that the church in Persia comprised indigenous Iranian and Syriac and Greek-speaking communities that were re-settled in various regions of Iran.⁵³⁵ However, as the officially

⁵³³ YOUNG, 1974, pp. 21; MOFFETT, 1992, pp.91-254. The Sassanid Empire, as YOUNG, 1974, pp.17 observes, stressed centralization of power coupled with nationalism and patriotism “and Zoroastrianism, as the state religion, was the symbol of this.” However, for the first decade of Sassanid rule, Christianity was neither recognized nor in danger of annihilation, which contributed to its peaceful growth. In addition, no record of persecution of the church by state in Persia is recorded prior to the time of Šāpūr II (309-379). The nature of the persecutions from the time of Šāpūr II was mainly political and religious; one motivated by suspicions about the disloyalty of Christians in favour of the Roman Empire, which announced Christianity as its state religion, and another by the religious zeal of Zoroastrian clergy desiring the widespread triumph of their faith. A detailed discussion of persecution in the Persian Empire is found in YOUNG, 1974, pp. 21-26; BROCK, 1982, pp. 1-19. The most recent treatment of the subject as ‘imagined experience’ is found in PAYNE, 2011, pp. 89-113.

⁵³⁴ For a discussion of this, see SCHER, 1908, pp. 221-222; FIEY, 1973, pp. 75-104; CHAUMONT, 1988, pp. 158.

⁵³⁵ The significance of these ‘deported’ Christian communities within the Persian Empire, as highlighted by FIEY, 1969, pp. 238, is indicated by the fact that three out of the five bishops of Kūzestān attending the synod of Isaac in 410 CE were from cities settled by the Roman prisoners. Furthermore, the council of Mar Dādīšo in 424 CE consecrated the Rēw-Ardašīr, to which Šāpūr I resettled much of the Roman prisoners, as the metropolitan see of the ecclesiastical province of Fārs (CHABOT, 1902, pp. 681). In addition, the acts of the synod name a bishopric by the name of Šbītā dā Bēlašparr. The location of this bishopric is indicated in FIEY, 1968, III, pl. I. If the town of Šbītā was identical with that of Šwīta, as pointed by FIEY, 1970, pp. 382, then there is also a possibility that Roman captives were scattered in Gorgān. At any rate, it is clear from toponyms used in the Synodical acts that these bishoprics were established to meet the need of re-settled Christian people from the

recognized Church of the Sasanian Empire, the Church of the East had to demonstrate conformity with its geo-political and cultural setting. This was displayed through its socio-political engagement with the Persian monarchy, as well as by integration into the local social fabric, manifested in the material culture via adoption of local architectural models for building churches as well as the integration of Christian symbols in objects of public and private use, such as seals and coins. Another fundamental matter displaying the integration of Christianity into Persian contexts was the translation of Christian texts, in particular the Bible, into the local language, to which the Pahlavi Psalter bears testimony.⁵³⁶ The significance of these material expressions was that they showed the church to be a locally inherent social institution of the Zoroastrian monarchy.

Likewise, when the Church of the East was planted in Sogdiana, it had to display conformity with its local socio-cultural and political setting in a tangible way. The above-discussed material culture (architectural and small objects) vividly illustrates the integration of Christianity into Sogdian society through a material expression that was both locally produced and imported. As exemplified by Ibn Hawqal's record, these material culture products, especially the architecture, have provided a landmark for geographers and historians and also formed part of local popular memory i.e. local residents would have referred to the area by its major landmark, such as the church building.

These material culture objects served as a means of visual identity for Christians in the multi-religious milieu of Sogdiana. In other words, Christians were differentiated by their material culture objects e.g. by wearing pendant crosses, Christians displayed their religious belief.

Roman territories. It is even more interesting to consider the effect that these non-Iranian Christian populations may have had on their Iranian neighbors.

⁵³⁶ A more recent study of the Pahlavi Psalter including relevant bibliography references is found in DURKIN-MEISTERERNS, 2006, pp. 1-19.

CHAPTER FOUR: MANIFESTATIONS OF ‘SOGDIAN CHRISTIANITY’ IN ITS TEXTS

Introduction

The diversity of the vocabulary in Sogdian Christian texts was first noted by Émile Benveniste in 1963, where he focused on various categories of Christian terminology: either Middle Persian or technical words designated as Syriac loanwords.⁵³⁷ A further study on the topic was undertaken by Olaf Hansen in 1966 who also presented a list of Syriac Christian technical terms and their Sogdian counterparts. In particular, he stressed the Persian background and characteristics of Sogdian Christian texts, as manifested in their use of Middle Persian words.⁵³⁸ The ‘final’, comprehensive study on ‘Syriac elements in Sogdian’ was completed by Nicholas Sims-Williams in 1988, who concluded that ‘the material collected will also contribute to the study of the Nestorian church in the East’.⁵³⁹

This chapter aims to highlight the philological ‘mechanisms’ used in translating Christian texts into Sogdian and is based on the methodological models of the aforementioned scholars. In particular, it aims to show how different Christian theological and ecclesiological vocabularies were translated from Syriac. However, the principal aim of the chapter is not philological but historical; that is to discuss individual vocabulary as well as the manuscripts themselves as a category of evidence on the nature of ‘Sogdian Christianity’. Particular emphasis will be given to showing how the Sogdian Church linguistically contextualized its theological and ecclesiological concepts.

Sogdian Christian texts: Survey

Sogdian Christian texts are one of the largest extant Christian bodies of writing in an Iranian language. The discovery of Sogdian texts in the early decades of the twentieth century by members of the German Turfan Expeditions was a significant event for scholars of Iranology, as the decipherment of these texts contributed significantly to knowledge about the Sogdian language and civilization, which was very meager until then.⁵⁴⁰ All Sogdian Christian texts

⁵³⁷ BENVENISTE, 1964, pp. 85-92.

⁵³⁸ HANSEN, 1966, pp. 95-105.

⁵³⁹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1988, pp. 145-156.

⁵⁴⁰ Prior to the discovery of the Sogdian texts in 1904, LERKH, 1876, pp. 419-429, based on readings of the legends in Bukhar Khudat coins, suggested the existence of the Sogdian language. Lerkh’s publication that focused on the analysis of the coins from Bukhara with Sogdian legends coincided with the publication of the historical-geographical work of Wilhelm Tomaschek titled *Sogdiana*, TOMASCHEK, 1877. Tomaschek’s publication is the first comprehensive study in European scholarship presenting a historical-geography of Sogdiana based on the classical and medieval authors.

known today derive from the ruins of a monastery at Shuipang near Bulayïq and nearby sites, as well as a few from the Dunhuang area.⁵⁴¹

The texts were discovered during the four campaigns by the German Turfan Expedition led by Albert Grünwedel and Alber von le Coq between 1902 and 1914. Consequently, the majority of manuscripts are at present held in Germany in the *Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften*, with smaller collections being housed in the *Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz* and in the *Museum für Indische Kunst*.⁵⁴²

The eminent German scholar Edward Sachau made the first foray into Christian Sogdian texts when he published in 1905 a fragment of the now well-known C2 codex.⁵⁴³ However, he was able to identify and understand only a few words and accordingly could not contribute significantly to the understanding of these texts. The breakthrough in the decipherment of the texts came two years later in 1907 after the identification of a New Testament passage in a lectionary by F.W.K. Müller.⁵⁴⁴ He published the identified New Testament fragments—which he claimed to be a key to understanding the previously unknown Sogdian language in 1913 in a special volume entitled *Soghdische Texte I*.⁵⁴⁵ In 1907, the Russian Orientalist Carl Salemann republished both of the above-mentioned works by Sachau (1905) and Müller (1907), with improved readings and suggestions about the identification of various words and

⁵⁴¹ On the Bulayïq monastery where most of the Christian manuscripts were found, see SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1990, pp. 545. The initial record on the discovery of Christian manuscripts at Bulayïq is found in VON LE COQ, 1928, pp. 100-101. The question of the nature and a historical sketch of Christianity in the Turfan Oasis have been addressed in HAGE, 1987, pp. 46-57 and SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1992, pp. 43-61. For discussion of the Christian manuscripts deriving from Dunhuang, see SIMS-WILLIAMS & HAMILTON, 1990, pp. 51-76 as well as KLEIN and TUBACH, 1994, pp. 1-13. It is also thought that some of the Sogdian Christian texts of Turfan collection were found in Qocho and Toyoq.

⁵⁴² The manuscripts discovered by the German-Turfan expeditions represent over 40,000 fragments in 22 languages and 20 scripts. The texts are of both religious and secular nature representing Buddhist, Manichean, Zoroastrian and Christian religious writings. For the brief history of German archaeological expeditions in Turfan see: ZHANG & XINJIANG, 1998, pp. 13-37. On the Syriac manuscripts from Turfan that were brought to and are currently housed in St. Petersburg see MESHCHERSKAYA, 1996, pp. 221-227. These documents were found at the same time as the German-Turfan expeditions were taking place and were partially found and partially bought by Krotkov, N. On discussion of some of the Christian fragments from Turfan (either Syriac or bilingual), see DICKENS, 2009b, pp. 22-42; *ibid*, 2009c, pp. 92-120. For the full details of Sogdian Christian texts held in Berlin see SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2012. The collection of the Christian texts discovered at Turfan, beyond and above their great philological value, is the easternmost corpus of medieval Christian texts of various ethno-linguistic groups of Central Asia. This collection represents texts in Syriac, Pahlavi, Sogdian, New Persian and Uighur.

⁵⁴³ For this publication, see SACHAU, 1905. The New Testament passages identified by Müller were published in 1913 titled *Soghdische Texte I* and additional fragments of the same series were published by Werner Sundermann. For more details see MÜLLER, 1913; MÜLLER & LENTZ, 1934; SUNDERMANN, 1974, pp. 217-255 *ibid*, 1975, pp. 55-90, *ibid*, 1981a, pp. 169-225.

⁵⁴⁴ MÜLLER, 1907, pp. 260. The first specimen of Sogdian text ever published was the Sogdian Manichean fragment *M 178* (MÜLLER, 1904) which HENNING, 1948, pp. 306 acclaimed to be “the best preserved Manichean fragment, a double folio, of white, thin leather, a masterpiece of calligraphy”.

⁵⁴⁵ MÜLLER, 1913.

their semantics.⁵⁴⁶ This publication was highly significant as it paved the way for Salemann's grammatical excursus on the Sogdian language, which he published in 1913.⁵⁴⁷ The latter was the first ever publication on Sogdian grammar based on the Sogdian Christian texts that had been studied at that time.

Twenty years later in 1934, one of the significant early publications of Sogdian Christian texts, jointly published by F.W.K. Müller and Wolfgang Lentz in a volume titled *Soghdische Texte II* appeared.⁵⁴⁸ One unique aspect of this volume was that it introduced assorted textual categories represented among the Sogdian Christian texts, such as the well-known apocryphal *Acts of Peter*- one of the earliest texts describing the missionary engagement of the Apostles in particular focusing on Peter and Paul.⁵⁴⁹

The exact location of the production of the Sogdian Christian texts cannot be determined, however. Apart from the Bulayïq monastery where the majority of the texts were discovered and where they may have been produced, other possible places from which they could have originated are Samarqand and its surrounding cities, like Panjikent, Urgut and Čač. This assumption is based on literary and material evidence demonstrating the strong position of Christianity in these locations. Firstly Samarqand, the capital city of Sogdiana, is reported to be one of the early metropolitanate sees of the Church of the East in Central Asia, consecrated between the fifth and eighth centuries.⁵⁵⁰ Its prime ecclesiastical position together with the existence of the ecclesiastical and possibly monastic institutions in the vicinity also raises the possibility of literary activities, such as the production and translation of Christian literature. However, it is enigmatic that no textual evidence (manuscript) of Christian literature has, to date, been found in Sogdiana proper. This may be due to social-historical factors, such as the Arab invasion that contributed to the destruction of texts in Sogdiana. As indicated by the scarcity of finds of manuscripts in paper in Sogdiana, natural climatic conditions cannot be ruled out either.⁵⁵¹ In the light of this, it is telling that the only

⁵⁴⁶ SALEMANN, 1907.

⁵⁴⁷ SALEMANN, 1913.

⁵⁴⁸ MÜLLER & LENTZ, 1934.

⁵⁴⁹ MÜLLER & LENTZ, pp. 528-531. Other notable texts introduced in this volume include the *Life of Baršabbā*- a document narrating the evangelization of Marv and its adjoining territories by a Christian priest deported from Mesopotamia by the Sassanid monarch (*ibid*, pp. 522-528 (Sogdian) pp. 559-564 (Syriac).); *The legends of the invention of the cross*- a document about how St. Helen, the mother of Constantine recovered the relic of the Jesus' cross (*ibid*, pp. 513-521).

⁵⁵⁰ This is reported by Eastern Syriac writers Ibn al-Tayyib (1043) and Abdisho bar Berikha (1290). Discussion is found in MAI, 1838, pp.141-142, 146; HOENERBACH & SPIES, 1956-57, pp. 123. Further discussions on chronology of elevation of Samarqand as metropolitanate see is found in COLLESS 1986, pp.51-57; DAUVILLIER, 1948, pp. 283-286.

⁵⁵¹ The textual evidence from early medieval 5-9 century discovered in Sogdiana includes the commercial and juridical documents, known as Mount Mugh documents. Majority of these documents are written in parchment,

Christian ‘written’ evidence from Sogdiana is epigraphic, i.e. the inscriptions incised on mountain walls and caves that have been discovered in Urgut and a Syriac ostrakon containing biblical texts found in Panjikent.⁵⁵² The Urgut Syriac inscriptions- really graffiti- consist of mainly personal names and short phrases inscribed with a random assortment of crosses. The majority of the names occurring in these inscriptions are Syriac, but there are also a few Persian, Arabic and Turkic appellations. The most common Syriac name is Yuhannan and one of the Persian names reads Nawruz.⁵⁵³ However, in light of the common practice of post-baptismal name changing among Christians, it is possible that some of the people with Syriac names actually may have been Persian, Sogdian or even Turkish; the Urgut inscriptions do not however reveal the ethnic background of their writers.⁵⁵⁴ Irrespective of their ethnicity, these inscriptions can definitely be said to have been left by a Christian community whose presence in Urgut is confirmed by the architectural remains of their church.⁵⁵⁵

The ostrakon from Panjikent contains the first three verses of Psalm 1 and parts of six verses of Psalm 2 in Syriac.⁵⁵⁶ The Psalter text corresponds to the Peshitta. Azza Paykova, based on a paleographic examination of the inscriptions, suggested that the ostrakon, which was dated to 760 - 770 CE, might have served as scribal tablet for a writing exercise by a Sogdian student.⁵⁵⁷ Obvious lexical and orthographic mistakes point to the fact that the text was copied from dictation.⁵⁵⁸ The ostrakon was found on the second floor of the dwelling house (object 16), which, in its third habitation period, was detached from the adjoining room (object 13), a decorated hall with murals depicting Sogdian deities and a fire altar. The fire altar in the third period was converted into an ordinary fireplace and the room became some sort of workshop, possibly a Christian school signified by the mentioned ostrakon. In the

wood and few in paper. However, no Christian or other religious text i.e. manuscripts, was found in Sogdiana proper, yet.

⁵⁵² For the Syriac ostrakon discovered in Panjikent, including relevant reference to the studies about the Syriac inscriptions in Urgut see PAYKOVA, 1979, pp. 159-169; *ibid*, 1981, pp.78-86; MESHERSKAYA & PAYKOVA, 1981, pp. 109-110.

⁵⁵³ DICKENS, forthcoming (a). I wish to thank Dr. Dickens for sharing with me information from his manuscript of Catalogue of Urgut Inscriptions to be published soon. The discussion of the caves where the inscriptions were found and relevant bibliography was mentioned in CHAPTER 3 this dissertation.

⁵⁵⁴ Syriac names are defiantly attested in epitaph inscriptions from Semirechye, which was a dominantly Turkish region. Moreover, it is very possible that majority of those who bore Syriac names were not Assyrians. For studies, dealing with the general historical setting and linguistic peculiarities of these inscriptions see: SLUCKIY, 1889, pp.1-66, *ibid*, 1891, pp. 176-194; KORSH, 1889, NÖLDEKE, 1890; HALEVY, 1890.

⁵⁵⁵ The ‘Urgut Church’ is discussed in CHAPTER 3 this dissertation.

⁵⁵⁶ PAYKOVA, 1979, pp. 159-169; *ibid*, 1981, pp.78-86; MESHERSKAYA & PAYKOVA, 1981, pp. 109-110.

⁵⁵⁷ Dated on numismatic ground, the coins of Turghar ca. 738/740 CE.

⁵⁵⁸ PAYKOVA, 1979, pp. 159-169.

floor of the adjunct room (object 17), a shard with the cross incised on it was also found.⁵⁵⁹ The presence of this material evidence, i.e. the ostrakon with the biblical inscription and the shard with the incised cross, strongly support the supposition that the two premises, i.e. objects 16 and 17, where they were found, was used by a Christian community as a school. The connection of Sogdian Christian texts found in Turfan with Čač is indicated by bilingual, more precisely Greek and Sogdian, Psalter fragments.⁵⁶⁰ Since the only Syriac-speaking church that employed Greek in its liturgy and literature was the so-called Melkite Church, it is possible that this manuscript emanated from such a community. The major sources for the history of the Melkite Church in Central Asia are the *Ātār al-bāqīa* otherwise known as “The Chronology of Ancient Nations” by Al-Bīrūnī, which records their feasts and festivals; and the *Life of the Melkite Patriarch of Antioch Christophoros* by Ibrahīm ibn Yuḥannā.⁵⁶¹ According to Al-Bīrūnī, in Central Asia this community was present in Čač, Chorasmia and Marv.⁵⁶²

Orthography and Numbers

Collectively numbering about 600 fragments, the Sogdian Christian texts are written in both the adapted Syriac and cursive Sogdian scripts.⁵⁶³ The modified Syriac script uses the additional letters *f*, *x* and *ž* for Middle Persian and Sogdian words.⁵⁶⁴ Further, in Sogdian Christian texts in Syriac script the diacritic points, similar to Syriac, are also used for indicating the vowels.⁵⁶⁵ Accordingly, Sogdian Christian texts in modified Syriac distinguish between high *i/ī* and mid *e/ē* and between high *u/ū* and mid *o/ō*.⁵⁶⁶ The Sogdian Christian texts in Sogdian cursive script are most often recognizable by their Syriac captions. Where

⁵⁵⁹ PAYKOVA & MARSHAK, 1976, pp. 36-38.

⁵⁶⁰ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2004, pp.623-631.

⁵⁶¹ ZAYAT, 1952, pp. 11-38. Most recently JULLIEN, 2006, pp.118 opined that this hagiography is probably a literary construction mirroring the exile of Demetrianus, the Patriarch of Antioch in 260 CE. The edition of the feasts of Melkites recorded by Bīrūnī is found in GRIVEAU, 1914, pp. 291-312. For the relevant section on this see the translation of Bīrūnī's *Ātār al-bāqīa* by SACHAU, 1879, pp. 282-298. The discussion of the Bīrūnī are found in DUVAILLIER, 1953, pp. 62-87; NASRALLAH, 1976, pp.16-33; JULLIEN, 2006, pp. 105-142.

⁵⁶² SACHAU, 1879, pp. 282-298.

⁵⁶³ The Sogdian cursive is a script primarily used in Sogdian Buddhist and secular documents. However, its use for Manichean and Christian texts is also attested. SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2009, pp. 271; RECK, 2008, pp. 191-197. According to RECK, 2008, pp. 191-205 “...there are nearly 500 fragments in Nestorian [Eastern Syriac-estrangēlā] script against about 50 fragments in Sogdian script.”

⁵⁶⁴ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2009, pp. 271-272. In few Sogdian Christian manuscripts in adapted Syriac script use of “another new letter (a variant of *g* transliterated as *ḡ* or *ḡ* for fricative [ɣ], but in general the sound [ɣ] is represented by the Syriac letter ‘e.’)”

⁵⁶⁵ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2009, pp. 272. This feature is especially useful since the vowels are “represented only by the so-called *matres lectionis* (‘, y, w) and short vowels are often not marked at all. Moreover, unlike the Manichean and Sogdian [cursive] scripts, in which *δ* represents both voiced [ð] and voiceless [θ] the Syriac script distinguishes between [ð] and [θ], which are written with Syriac *dālath* and *tau* respectively.”

⁵⁶⁶ SKJÆRVØ 1996, pp.533

the Syriac titles have not survived, the drawing of a sign of the cross in the margins, the use of red or brown ink and the “peculiar roundish shape of the letters” are also particular features by which Sogdian Christian texts in Sogdian cursive script are identified.⁵⁶⁷

Historically, the most common impetus for the adaptation of the existing script of one language for previously unwritten languages in cultures without a writing system or literary culture is a well-known phenomenon in Christian missionary history. However, the development of new scripts within one language, with an established orthography, is very intriguing.

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, in Sogdiana from the earliest centuries of the millennium there was a developed writing system.⁵⁶⁸ Accordingly, the fact that Sogdian already had its own script makes it possible to explain why Sogdians chose to produce Christian literature in modified Syriac. Alternatively, why was only a certain category of literature written in a certain script?

In light of the above it is clear that the development of different scripts was circumstantial (caused by circumstances) and phenomenal (a sociolinguistic event). One of the circumstances contributing to the development of Sogdian Christianity was the pluralism of Sogdian society, where Christianity had to compete with other religions, such as Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism and Buddhism.⁵⁶⁹ Accordingly, in Sogdian society Christianity needed to be distinctive in its visual representation. The script in which Christian texts were written and translated was one of the visual forms of representation; other visual forms of course included architecture and devotional objects discussed earlier.

James Farwell Coakley, discussing the Garshuni texts, i.e. Arabic texts written in Syriac, points out that it was “an attempt to distinguish Christian [Arabic] texts at sight, or to limit

⁵⁶⁷ RECK, 2008, pp. 191. It is not known however if the roundish shape of the letters in Sogdian Christian texts is the influence of *esṭrangēlā* script or merely an orthographic variation. As HATCH, 2002, pp. 24 pointed out the name *esṭrangēlā* is believed to derive from the Greek adjective *στρογγύλη* (*strongylē*, ‘rounded’). Further noting that some scholars believes it to derive from *𐰽𐰺𐰍 𐰇𐰏𐰤* (*serṭā ’ewangēlāyā*, ‘gospel character’).

⁵⁶⁸ The use of the Aramaic model in early medieval period in Central Asian region to write languages, which had no literary tradition, such as Uighur and Manchu is a different phenomenon; that is these languages did not possess developed orthography as well literature. As observed in KARA, 1996, pp. 550. The Manchu script was devised under the reign of the Nurhachi, founder of the Manchu Empire, in 1599. This took place by adding some new symbols to the existing at that time Mongolian. However, it is only possible to say that “this easternmost descendant of the Aramaic script is an ideal tool for recording Manchu phonemes and some allophones” after the reform in 1632. The script was also used formerly for writing Mongolic Daur and is still used today for the Manchu dialect of the Shibe (Xibe) people.

⁵⁶⁹ Although it is not possible to say how big these religions were numerically, but the textual traditions and material culture left behind by their adherents demonstrate their cultural significance and strong presence amongst Sogdians and their neighbors. Further, considering that these were missionary religions, their public engagement and participation in society was very intense, each striving to gain more popular and attract more adepts.

them to Christian readers, or simply to serve those educated within the community who were unpracticed with the Arabic script.”⁵⁷⁰ This observation may also be applied to Sogdian Christian literature for which the modified Syriac script was adapted. Therefore, the adaptation of Syriac for writing Christian texts in Sogdiana was meant to distinguish them from texts of other religions in circulation that were also identifiable by their scripts. Above all, the obvious reason was of course the status of Syriac as the *lingua sacra* of the Church of the East.

The use of the original Sogdian cursive is also attested in Christian texts. The main body of literature in this group is represented by the Psalter, the Nicene Creed and hymn fragments.⁵⁷¹ The use of the Sogdian cursive in Christian literature in Sogdian according to Christiane Reck was possibly due to the popularity of this script among the populace, who otherwise were not able to read the texts written in the adapted Syriac script.⁵⁷²

Considering that every language can be written in any script, and that language and script have no affixed obligatory relationship, the choice of a certain script above others perhaps has to do with ‘cultural actors’, namely individuals and their historical backgrounds. Pier Giorgio Borbone, examining the Hebrew language and linguistic history of the Jewish people has argued that the Jews expressed their sense of belonging to the religious community and ethnic group by choosing their own writing system for their language.⁵⁷³ In this respect, the choice of the script, as well borrowing of vocabulary, both in texts and for other uses, such as personal names, is not a purely technical matter for translation purposes only, but also involves major social and cultural implications. An example could be the use of Christian names often borrowed from Syriac. The person bearing such a name would be known by it both within their Christian community as well outside it. Furthermore, such people may have used it to sign or write their names in either the modified Syriac or original Sogdian scripts. Such examples are known from the Syriac graffiti from Urgut where there are at least two Persian names, Bakht and Nawruz.⁵⁷⁴ Further examples are provided by the Sogdian documents from Dunhuang. For example, the letter ‘Text G’ (OR. 8212 (89)) “mentions

⁵⁷⁰ COAKLEY, 2001, pp. 187.

⁵⁷¹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2009, pp. 271; RECK, 2008, pp. 191-197. The edition of the hymn is found in SIMS-WILLIAMS, forthcoming

⁵⁷² RECK, 2008, pp. 197. BARBATI, 2013, pp. 185 considered the use of the Sogdian cursive in Psalter fragment to indicate “wide circulation and popularity” of this biblical literature. The Psalter fragments are known in Middle Persian written in Pahlavi and New Persian written in Syriac script. This particular orthographic situation in Sogdian Christian texts is comparable to the Manichean texts produced in both Manichean and cursive scripts.

⁵⁷³ BORBONE, 2005, pp. 17.

⁵⁷⁴ DICKENS forthcoming (a)

several persons who are presumably Christians: the addressee, who bears the Syriac name Giwargis (George); a monk, whose name may be interpreted as Sogdian (Kwr'k?), Turkish (Küräg?), or Chinese (Kuang?); and a priest with the Sogdian name Wanu-čor and the Syriac title *reṣṣ* 'ēdtā “bursar, steward”, literally “ecclesiarch”.⁵⁷⁵

Such interactions, that is being known (called) in society by a name associated with Christianity, as well as having the ability to read or write a writing system known from Christian texts, provided contexts for Sogdian Christians to represent their religious identity through distinct orthographic and onomastic devices.

Furthermore, one may view the choice of a modified Syriac script for Sogdian Christian literature as a phenomenon that is widely attested in the Syriac Christian tradition of the Middle East and Asia, namely Garshuni.⁵⁷⁶ The basic application of Garshuni was the transcription of Arabic using Syriac characters in the Christian literature of Western Syriac, namely Syrian Orthodox and Maronite churches. However, it similarly applies to the Armenian, Malayalam and New Persian texts written in Eastern Syriac as well.

Accordingly, the use of Syriac for writing Sogdian Christian literature may be viewed as a symbolic representation of the religious identity of the Sogdian Christians over and above their linguistic identity. Even more intriguing in the philological context would be to ask whether the use of modified Syriac for writing Sogdian Christian literature can be considered as an independent writing system within the family of Iranian languages.

Literary Genres

Sogdian Christian texts include a broad assortment of literary genres. The *Iranian manuscripts in Syriac script in the Berlin Turfan collection* catalogue edited by Sims-Williams designate the following categories:⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁵ SIMS-WILLIAMS & HAMILTON, 1990, pp. 63-76. The brief discussions of the Dunhuang texts are also found in SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2009, pp. 286-288.

⁵⁷⁶ With an unknown etymology the term Garshuni normally is understood to designate the textual traditions employing Syriac script, such Arabic texts written in Syriac, or Armenian, Malayalam and Kurdish texts written in Eastern Syriac scripts. For discussions on etymology and as well bibliography see COAKLEY, 2001, pp. 186-187; BRIQUEL-CHATONNET et al, 2006, pp. 141-147. On Kurdish and Turkish Garshuni texts see PENNACCHIETTI, 1976, pp. 548-552; PROVERBIO, 2004, pp.583-635. On the use of term in Persian see MAGGI, 2003, pp. 112 who states that the “Christian New Persian texts were later written in Syriac script in what, broadly speaking, could be termed Karšūnī manuscripts proper containing Christian Arabic texts in Syriac script.” An interesting observation has to be made here regarding ORSATTI, 2003, pp. 147-176, who has not used the term Garshuni in relation to the Baptismal liturgical hymn in New Persian written in Syriac. For the translation of the hymn and its linguistic notes see SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2011b, pp.353-374

⁵⁷⁷ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2012. In addition, the detailed overview of the Christian literature in Middle Persian and Sogdian can be found in SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2009, pp. 266-287. The general survey of the Christian manuscripts in various languages, including Sogdian, discovered at Turfan and Dunhuang is also given in DICKENS, 2009b, pp. 22-42, *ibid*, 2009c, 92-120.

1. Biblical texts in the Sogdian Christian corpus are represented by Gospel and Epistle passages surviving in lectionary fragments. From the Old Testament canon, the only literature represented is the Psalter written in cursive Sogdian script.⁵⁷⁸
2. Liturgy, hymns and prayers. Except for the *Nicene Creed* (E17) and the hymn *Gloria in excelsis Deo* (E18) which were probably used during the liturgy, all liturgical texts known from Turfan are in Syriac. The only Sogdian in these texts is in rubrics containing instructions to the celebrant (examples and discussion given below).⁵⁷⁹
3. Hagiography, homilies and general Christian literature. The majority of texts in this category is represented by the literature devoted to the lives of various martyrs and saints.
4. Miscellaneous, secular and indeterminate texts. The only texts in this category related to the church are perhaps the calendar fragments. The calendar may have been employed for determining religious feasts and holiday dates.

Linguistic Variety

In addition to genres and content, Sogdian Christian texts are also differentiated by their linguistic usage.⁵⁸⁰ Based on the majority of manuscripts, the principal languages used in Sogdian Christian manuscripts are Syriac and Sogdian. There are also a few fragments attesting the use of other languages such as Greek and Uighur.⁵⁸¹

In the texts composed entirely in Sogdian, such as hagiographical writings, Syriac is used to indicate the titles. In some fragments, the titles of the texts are given in both Syriac and

⁵⁷⁸ The Sogdian Christian texts in Sogdian script are not included in above named catalogue, but will appear in the near future in *Mitteliranische Handschriften, Teil 3* compiled by Christiane Reck.

⁵⁷⁹ Both the E17 and E18 are written in Sogdian cursive script. However, as SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2012, pp. 59 points out since the title of the document E17 is written in Syriac script qualified it to be included in the 'Syriac script' catalogue.

⁵⁸⁰ DICKENS, 2009b, pp. 22-42 has identified the following 'text categories' in Turfan collection based on their language use, that is use of one or more languages:

1. Bilingual fragments in Syriac and Sogdian (Syriac script): 17 fragments.
2. Bilingual fragments in Syriac and Sogdian (Sogdian script): 14 fragments.
3. Bilingual texts in Syriac but instructions given in Sogdian (Syriac script): 6 fragments.
4. Syriac texts with multilingual marginalia and overwriting. There are nine fragments identified, which have marginalia or overwriting either in Sogdian or in Uighur.
5. Trilingual text (Syriac, Sogdian and Uighur) in mixed scripts.

⁵⁸¹ The use of Greek in Sogdian Christian manuscripts is attested by unique Psalter fragments. The edition of these texts are found in SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2004, pp. 623-631; *ibid*, 2011a, pp. 461-467. The role of Uighur language in Sogdian Christian texts cannot be determined. In the currently identified fragments Uighur is used in marginalia or is written on top of the 'faded' Sogdian or Syriac texts; thus they are not part of the original composition. For example, Greek in Psalter fragment is used to quote the first phrase or line of the Psalter, which is continued afterwards in Sogdian, but Uighur overwriting or marginalia, is more like personal notes of those who used the texts in the church service or recycled them to write other notes.

Sogdian, e.g. C2/57 ‘*On the divine mercy to Creation*’.⁵⁸² Aside from hagiographies and general Christian literature, a similar use of Syriac is manifested in the monolingual lectionaries (lectionaries composed entirely in Sogdian), such as E5 (formerly C5), E32 (formerly C33).⁵⁸³ In this manuscript, Syriac is used to introduce the readings (Gospel passages). Furthermore, the opening word is given in both Syriac and Sogdian. In most cases headings and titles given in Syriac are written in rubrics.

However, since Syriac was the principal language of the liturgy of the Church of the East, the majority of liturgical texts discovered at Turfan, such as the Hudra fragments are solely in Syriac. There are only a few individual liturgical fragments rubricated in Sogdian.⁵⁸⁴ The Sogdian rubrics are of a ‘guiding note’ character, namely instructions for the clergy (priest or archdeacon responsible for performing the rite) about how the liturgy ought to be performed. For example, on folio HT 66 *recto* where the baptismal rite is found, the following can be observed (Sogdian rubrics are given in *italics*):

“The Sovereign Lord of all. *He says:* crying out Holy, holy, holy. *He says this softly:* May there be fulfilled, therefore, now also, O Lord, by your grace this great awesome mystery....*Afterwards the priest takes the oil and seals that oil which is on the altar (thronos) with the likeness of the cross and he says,* This oil is marked and mingled with the holy oil.”⁵⁸⁵

The linguistic use observed in Sogdian Christian texts points to the distinct role or position of these languages. That is, Syriac was the *lingua sacra* (church language), the official language in which the church service was conducted, but had limited communal usage. On the other hand, Sogdian was a language spoken and understood by the majority of the populace, both in the church and outside, in day-to-day business contexts. In other words, Sogdian was the primary channel through which Christianity was transmitted in the wider social context as opposed to Syriac which was probably mostly restricted to the clergy.

⁵⁸² SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp.121

⁵⁸³ The detailed description and bibliographic references for E5 lectionary are found in SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2012, pp. 28, for E32 pp. 175-177. The E32 is the Pauline lectionary containing the reading from the Apostle Paul’s letters to the Romans, 5.21-6.10 and Colossians, 1.6-15. All other lectionary fragments (Gospel and Epistle) known are bilingual alternating Syriac and Sogdian.

⁵⁸⁴ The Syriac liturgical texts discovered at Turfan usually bear the subheadings of different parts of the service, such as prayer, Psalm and bible passage, but not detailed instruction about how to actually officiate the rite as seen in the above example. In most Syriac liturgical books however, such as *taksa* (Syriac order of service), there are instructions about officiating different rites. I owe this information to Dr. Dickens for which I wish to thank him. Personal communication March 27, 2012.

⁵⁸⁵ Translation reproduced from BROCK & SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2011, pp. 81-92.

Since the liturgical texts bear instructions in Sogdian this indicates that the clergy were Sogdian –speakers; thus these liturgical texts were organised specifically for the Christian community led by Sogdians.

Valuable insight into “Sogdian Christianity” comes from the Luoyang stele, which is incised in Chinese. It names several Sogdian clergymen who held high ecclesiastical positions, such as *Harmony of the Doctrine*, *Head of the Monastery*, or *Great Virtue of the Nine Grades* at the church in Luoyang.⁵⁸⁶ These Sogdian clergy are identified by their last names, such as An and Kang, corresponding to Bukhara and Samarqand.

These Sogdian clergy named in the Luoyang stele as well as the person commemorated are probably second or third generation Sogdians who immigrated to China. Considering that religious practices passed down the family lineage it is possible that their forefathers were also Christians. The most intriguing fact here is that, in the face of the increase of ethnic assimilation that was in process at that time (seventh century), these Sogdian clergy retained their family names, indicating the close ties that they maintained with their community possibly both within China and of course in Sogdiana proper.

The increase of Sogdian clergy may suggest the decline of Syriac fluency in the church, but also points to the mnemonic skills of the clergy. The use of Sogdian prompts telling clergy how to conduct the service may imply that the Syriac sections of the liturgy were learned by heart. However, it is important to recognize that Sogdian did not surpass Syriac as the *lingua sacra*. Nevertheless, being a common means of communication, its role in the contextualisation of the so-called Syriac Christianity in multilingual Central Asia was paramount. The significant vernacular role of Sogdian is illustrated by the fact that Uighur (Turkish) speakers translated Christian literature into Sogdian, instead of into their own mother tongue. The Uighur (Turkish) background of the translators is evident from, for example, unusual phonetic features like the insertion of the letter *aleph* before initial *r*, in e.g. *'rmy* ‘people’.⁵⁸⁷ According to Sims-Williams, this phonetic peculiarity “which is found consistently in a Christian Sogdian manuscript from Toyoq, and occasionally in the texts from Bulayīq, is a typical feature of Turkish spelling and pronunciation.”⁵⁸⁸

The Turkic personal names found in the Sogdian Christian texts also indicate the significance of Sogdian among Turkic-speaking Christians. Some of the personal names found include

⁵⁸⁶ The recent study of the Luoyang pillar is found in NICOLINI-ZANI, 2009, pp.99-140.

⁵⁸⁷ For examples and further references see: SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1992c, pp. 54; *ibid*, 2012, pp. 175. These names of Turkic origin, as the context dictates are presumably those that prayer amulet were written for. However, the relationship of these persons with either Turfan or Sogdiana cannot be determined, that is whether these were people living at Turfan or came from Sogdiana.

⁵⁸⁸ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1992c, pp. 54.

δβ'mn x'twn- 'the lady Khatun' attested in E17;⁵⁸⁹ or 'pγ - 'Apřγ' and 'sγ - 'Asřγ' attested in the prayer fragment E22.⁵⁹⁰ Accordingly, the use of language was an indicator of the ethnic dynamics in the Sogdian-speaking church at Turfan, where there were people of Syriac, Persian and Turkic backgrounds.

Historical theme: Continuity and Preservation

The Sogdian literary heritage is composed of rich and diverse written material, such as commodity receipts, marriage and sale contracts and letters, dedicatory epigraphic evidence, and multi-genre religious texts. Undoubtedly, all these sources collectively point to a highly developed literary tradition amongst the Sogdians. Yet, Sogdian Christian texts are not original compositions, but translations from Syriac sources.⁵⁹¹ However, "in some cases the [Syriac] originals are probably no longer extant".⁵⁹² Consequently, although factually some of the Sogdian texts are translations, they are also 'primary sources', as they are the only surviving copies of the lost Syriac originals. Accordingly, in addition to their contribution to understanding the history of Christianity among Sogdians, these texts also have value for the history of Syriac literature. In particular, Sogdian Christian texts in some cases have preserved a text form, which has not survived in the existing Syriac tradition. This particular feature demonstrates the continuity of Syriac literature in its Sogdian translation.

The Sogdian Christian manuscripts unfortunately cannot be dated firmly. This is due to both the absence of 'internal evidence' namely dates or colophons as well as 'external evidence' such as securely dated archaeological context or C14 examination. The general agreement is that they probably originated in the 9th-13th centuries, that is, the manuscripts were produced (copied, translated) in this period.⁵⁹³ However, the actual texts (contents of the manuscripts) represent much earlier literary traditions. For example, the *Commentary on Baptism and Eucharist Liturgy*, based on its style of composition, is thought to be from the early fifth century CE; however, the Sogdian manuscript was probably produced at least several

⁵⁸⁹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1992c, pp. 58; *ibid*, 2012, pp. 59 This personal name that is in Turkish texts is found as part of the female names could be either the name of the owner of the manuscript or one of the sponsors of the community. However, the relationship of this name with the text is not known.

⁵⁹⁰ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1992c, pp. 56-57; *ibid*, 2012, pp. 66.

⁵⁹¹ In regard to the fragment containing a polemic text addressed to Manichean Sims-Williams has said that it might be original Central Asian composition, but however later author re-considered this. See SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2003, pp. 399.

⁵⁹² SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2009, pp. 266. About the original sources of the Sogdian texts, the exception is the Greek-Sogdian bilingual text, which indicates to be translated from Septuagint. See: SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2004.

⁵⁹³ However, there are no exact criteria for dating these manuscripts. The current date of these fragments is very approximate. Professor Sims-Williams in a personal discussion in this matter pointed out to me that "we know no Sogdian written texts of any kind that are definitely later than the early 11th century."

centuries later.⁵⁹⁴ This text also survives in another three West Syrian manuscripts of the tenth-eleventh centuries, only one of which is complete. Sebastian Brock has commented:

“the fact that it was known to Melkite and East Syrian, as well as Syrian Orthodox, traditions would suggest that the text originated as a time prior to the separation of these three ecclesiastical traditions. A second indication of an early date is the absence of any reference to a post-baptismal anointing: as is well known, a post-baptismal anointing was only introduced in the Antiochene area at the very end of the fourth century and probably did not become widespread there until the second half of the fifth.”⁵⁹⁵

Another example of the ‘continuity and preservation’ theme is the Sogdian *Apostolic Canons*, including its appendix, which narrates the fates of the Apostles (E27-54/6).⁵⁹⁶ This text in the Syriac manuscript tradition “is known in various forms, both as an independent text and incorporated (in whole or in part) into works such as *Doctrine of Addai*, the *Didascalia Apostolorum* and other collections of legislative sources.”⁵⁹⁷

The Syriac tradition is the ultimate origin of the Sogdian text, as exemplified by a document published by William Cureton.⁵⁹⁸ However, the Sogdian translation of this text “shows no evidence of a close relationship with any particular MS or group of MSS” in existing Syriac sources.⁵⁹⁹ Moreover, “the Sogdian version of the Apostolic Canons...in few minor details ... appears to agree more closely with the Armenian version”.⁶⁰⁰ The correspondence between the Sogdian and Armenian versions may indicate that the Sogdian text was translated from an older form of the text than the extant Syriac versions, and that some features of this were also preserved in the Armenian translation.⁶⁰¹ Similarly, *The Profitable Counsels of Šem‘on d-Taibūtēh*,⁶⁰² although the manuscript cannot be precisely dated, has been given an approximate date of the ninth century CE, making it “about a millennium older than the surviving manuscript of the Syriac original.”⁶⁰³ The document contains material

⁵⁹⁴ The Sogdian translation of this text is examined and commented in SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 110-120. The detailed study of the Syriac versions of this document can be found in BROCK, 1980, pp. 20-61.

⁵⁹⁵ BROCK, 1980, pp. 22. In pp. 21 concludes that this document “must date from the early fifth century, seeing that it preserves an archaic structure of service, without post-baptismal anointing, and was early enough to be known to East, as well West, Syrian tradition.”

⁵⁹⁶ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 101-109; *ibid*, 1995e, pp. 287-295.

⁵⁹⁷ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 101.

⁵⁹⁸ On the origins and possible date of the document including other pertinent bibliography see SCHWARTZ, 1967, pp. 53-81; SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1995e, pp. 287.

⁵⁹⁹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 101.

⁶⁰⁰ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 101.

⁶⁰¹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2012 personal communication 24 February, 2012.

⁶⁰² KESSEL & SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2011, pp. 279-302.

⁶⁰³ KESSEL & SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2011, pp. 282-283.

without any clear equivalent in Syriac, and the order in which some sections appear also differs from the Syriac sources, e.g. §5 is placed after §8.⁶⁰⁴ This particular characteristic of the texts, too, demonstrates continuity of the unknown Syriac sources in Sogdian translation. The Pahlavi Psalter provides a comparable example to the Sogdian Christian texts with which it was found at Turfan. Initially it was thought to be from the first quarter of the fifth century CE.⁶⁰⁵ Prods Oktor Skjærvø argued, based on the orthographic and grammatical rules of the document being similar to the Sasanian inscriptions of the 3rd century, that the manuscript might belong to the early fourth century.⁶⁰⁶ However, based on recent C14 testing of the document, Dieter Weber has revealed that the manuscript was produced in the early ninth century.⁶⁰⁷ Accordingly, the philological peculiarities of the Pahlavi Psalter, which Skjærvø thought pointed to its dating between the Sassanid inscriptions and Book Pahlavi is explained by the fact that this text must have been copied continuously for some four centuries. Consequently, it preserved an old textual form, perhaps being the earliest translated form of the Psalter from Syriac into Pahlavi.

The above examples demonstrate how the older Syriac traditions, despite their disappearance or modification in the Syriac churches of Mesopotamia, were preserved and continued in the Sogdian church. In addition, these examples also reveal that Sogdian Christians (at least at the time when these texts were produced) in some aspects of their practices differed from the Church of the East in Mesopotamia. For example, E12/1, 2 (a Syriac baptism liturgy with Sogdian rubrics)⁶⁰⁸ differs from the currently known liturgy by the brevity of the prayer for the consecration of the anointing oil and baptismal water.⁶⁰⁹ This implies that, at least at the time when this manuscript was produced, the baptism service in the Sogdian church was shorter than in Mesopotamia. Likewise, the possibility that the current version of the rite has been lengthened and that the Sogdian retained the older form cannot be excluded. Further, as exemplified by E5 (the only Gospel lectionary solely in Sogdian), there may have also been differences in the annual readings.⁶¹⁰ E5 includes the Gospel readings, which are not in Syriac lectionaries, particularly the Gospel readings of Luke 13, 3-4 and Matthew 24, 24-26

⁶⁰⁴ KESSEL & SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2011, pp. 282-283.

⁶⁰⁵ ANDREAS, 1910, pp. 869-872 and ANDREAS & BARR, 1933, pp. 91-152.

⁶⁰⁶ SKJÆRVØ, 1983, pp. 47-62, 151-81.

⁶⁰⁷ Personal communication with Dr. Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst in 28-03-2012.

⁶⁰⁸ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2012, pp.54. Edition of the text is found in BROCK & SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2011, pp.81-92.

⁶⁰⁹ Edition of the text is found in BROCK & SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2011, pp.81-92.

⁶¹⁰ The concise description of this codex and relevant publication history is found in SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2012, pp. 28.

and 32-33.⁶¹¹ In addition, this lectionary includes commemoration days of the saints, such as bishop *Baršabbā*, which are not found in the existing Syriac lectionaries.⁶¹²

Physical Organization

The extant Sogdian Christian texts vary in their sizes and compositional arrangements. There are manuscripts containing a single work or a collection of thematically related texts, as well as manuscripts containing various unrelated texts.⁶¹³ One of the well-known examples of the latter manuscript group is the codex C2 (E27 in the latest catalogue edition) that is believed in its original composition to have contained at least 13 texts of various genres, such as martyrology or Apostolic Cannons.⁶¹⁴ In their layout and format, most of the Sogdian Christian manuscripts are written in Western-style codices, with only a single fragment being assumed to represent an Indian ‘pothī’ book.⁶¹⁵ However, according to Sims-Williams, “there is nothing to suggest that it ever had a string-hole like a real pothī”⁶¹⁶. The texts are written in paper with black, brown and red ink, with the red used for the opening lines, rubrics and headings. The Sogdian Christian texts are composed in one column and usually follow Syriac punctuations and the most used ornament or iconographic element is the sign of the cross.⁶¹⁷ The greatest ‘shortcoming’ of the existing Sogdian Christian texts is the lack of colophons, which would have been of immense help in dating and localization of these texts.

Philological Structure

As translated literature, Sogdian Christian texts display both a ‘dependence’ on original sources as well as an ‘independence’ from them.

The ‘dependence’ of the Sogdian Christian texts on Syriac is primarily displayed in the following features:

1. The use of loan words, especially technical terms or specific Christian expressions designating different ecclesiastical offices or practices, such as deacon, Eucharist etc. (These are detailed below.)

⁶¹¹ SUNDERMANN, 1975, pp. 55-90, in particular pp. 71-78.

⁶¹² SUNDERMANN, 1975, pp. 71-72. The discussion on *Baršabbā* is found in CHAPTER ONE this study.

⁶¹³ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2009, pp. 272.

⁶¹⁴ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985; SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2009, pp. 272.

⁶¹⁵ HANSEN 1968, pp. 94.

⁶¹⁶ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2009, pp. 272; SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2012, pp. 62.

⁶¹⁷ An example of this is shown in CHAPTER 2 this dissertation.

2. Retention of Syriac word-order and over-literal translation causing the creation of artificial syntax. However, verbal forms are kept in accord with Sogdian morpho-syntactical structure.⁶¹⁸ This is well evident in the example below:

a. Syriac: *mn [dšb ‘ ‘] d[n] (‘) t’ btry nkpwr bnpš(h)*

“whoever wants to come after me should give up his soul”

Sogdian: *(xwn)y ‘dy [qt q] (‘) mīt(qt’) yšt mn’ p(š)ys’ pstw’t [pr xypθ γ] (r)yw*

“whoever wants to come after me should give up his soul”⁶¹⁹

The ‘independence’ of the Sogdian Christian texts is displayed in the following:

1. The use of native Sogdian vocabulary or, on occasion, Persian loan words to translate both general Christian expressions and *termini technici* e.g. *by-* to translate ܐܠܗܐ *alāhā*- ‘God’. Further examples are detailed below.
2. The use of words or phrases which may have been part of a Sogdian literary style, as exemplified by the following sentence from lectionary C5:

a. Syriac: *‘mr yšw’ [ltl] (m) ydwhy* - ‘Jesus spoke to his disciples’

Sogdian: *w’nw frm’y xwt’w yšwγ qw xypθ [ž] wxšqt’ s’-* ‘So spoke the Lord Jesus to his disciples’⁶²⁰

In this example the adverb, *w’nw-* ‘so/thus’ is used at the beginning of the sentence containing Jesus’ speech. In addition, the use of the word *xwt’w-* ‘Lord’ in connection with Jesus’ name is also another stylistic feature of Sogdian Christian texts that is absent in Syriac where ‘Lord’ is not inserted before Jesus’ name on all occasions. Another additional word that is regularly used in Sogdian Christian texts, but is absent in Syriac is the adjective *nwšy-* ‘eternal’ that regularly qualified ‘life’ (Syriac *hy*) e.g. *nwšc žw’n-* ‘eternal life’.⁶²¹

Translations Mechanisms

Christian expressions in Sogdian Christian texts were translated using the following ‘vocabulary categories’:

1. Loanwords. Most loanwords found in Sogdian Christian texts were from Syriac and were given in transliteration. These are usually technical terms or personal names (for

⁶¹⁸ BARBATI, 2010, pp. 1-10 discussed this issue in example of the C5 lectionary. Particularly she highlighted that retention of Syriac word order led into emergence of artificial syntax. This is particularly evident when the verb is placed in the beginning of the sentence, which is not a feature of Sogdian. The Sogdian word-order is SOV, while Syriac is VSO. Barbaty pointed out that the same feature, that is verb in beginning of sentence, is common in most of the translated literature known from Turfan region e.g. Pahlavi psalter, Uighur texts.

⁶¹⁹ BARBATI, 2010, pp. 4.

⁶²⁰ BARBATI, 2010, pp. 3. A sentence from the Gospel of Mathew 10:15.

⁶²¹ PITTARD & SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2013, pp.48-49. Gospel lectionary (Mt. 19.17 V5). Similarly, Sogdian translations use the word ‘God’ whenever the word ‘father’ in the text is used in relation with God.

examples see below). In addition, there are a few Syriac words that were phonetically assimilated into Sogdian. There are also loanwords of Greek and Hebrew origin that were transmitted into Sogdian via Syriac.⁶²² Hansen remarked that the Syriac loanwords in Sogdian Christian texts for which the native equivalent is not attested are ‘relics’ of the earliest period when Christianity was introduced into Sogdian culture.⁶²³ In other words, these loanwords were at first used when the corresponding Christian vocabulary in native Sogdian was still evolving or Christianity was not well absorbed into linguistic setting of Sogdian culture. However, their subsequent retention and use together with Sogdian native words indicates that these words had become well known and were widely used. Therefore, the translator did not consider it urgent to translate them or attempt to find a corresponding word in Sogdian.

2. The second stratum of loanwords used in Sogdian Christian texts is represented by Middle Persian words such as *trs'q-* ‘Christian’, *pyw'q* ‘response’ and *x'nyš* ‘reading’.⁶²⁴ This category of vocabulary, as Benveniste has emphasized, bears qualitative significance as the words denote important theological and as well as general concepts.⁶²⁵ The Middle Persian vocabularies in Sogdian Christian texts indicate the familiarity of Sogdian Christians with the Christian literature in Middle Persian, or even possibly that the evangelization of Sogdiana was carried by the Middle Persian speakers. Today the only surviving example of Middle Persian Christian literature is the Pahlavi Psalter, which was discovered at Turfan.⁶²⁶ It is likely that there was more Christian Pahlavi literature, similar that in Sogdian, but which has not survived. Above all, the so-called Persian elements in Sogdian Christian texts are indicative of the robust inter-relationship of the churches in Sogdiana and Persia where the patriarch of the Church of the East resided.

⁶²² SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2001, pp. 36 pointed out that these ‘technical terms’ including adapted Syriac script used for writing Sogdian Christian texts were not ‘ever adopted by non-Christian users of the languages concerned’ that is Sogdian, Uighur and New Persian.

⁶²³ HANSEN, 1966, pp. 95-96 “relikte aus der anfangst der christianisierung.”

⁶²⁴ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2001, pp. 36 opined that “the use of Middle Persian for the vernacular parts of the liturgy was probably introduced into Central Asia during the initial stages of the Nestorian mission from Iran, but Middle Persian, which would not have been understood by the local population, was soon superseded by Sogdian.”

⁶²⁵ BENVENISTE, 1964, pp. 87 “ne comprend pas un grand de termes, mais ce sont les notions les plus généralés et souvent les plus importants en toute forme de croyances qu'ils dénotent.”

⁶²⁶ More recent study of the Pahlavi Psalter including relevant bibliography references is found in DURKIN-MEISTERERNS, 2006, pp. 1-19. There are also other Christian inscriptions in Pahlavi known, such as inscription in the processional cross discovered from Herat or cross plaques ornamented with Pahlavi inscriptions in South Asia i.e. India, Sri Lanka. For further discussions see GIGNOUX, 1995, pp. 411-422, *ibid*, 2001, pp. 291-304.

3. Native vocabulary. This category includes the Sogdian words used to translate various Syriac *termini technici* and general religious terminology, such as *mwžtybrqy* ‘Gospel’ to translate Syriac ܡܘܙܬܝܒܪܩܝ ‘evangelion’ or *zpṛt w’t* ‘Holy Spirit’ to translate ܪܘܚܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ *ruhā qdīšā*. The indigenous vocabularies in Sogdian Christian texts are sometimes used together with the Syriac loanwords i.e. same word both in its Syriac form as well as in ‘native word’. However, this was probably for stylistic purposes, that is to avoid repetition of the words. The fact that these words may have had symbolic meanings as well cannot be completely ruled out. Aside from linguistic reasons, the development or use of indigenous Sogdian terms can be interpreted as a ‘soli-linguistic’ phenomenon signalling the acculturation of the Church into the local context through the use of language.⁶²⁷ One feature of the native words devised to convey theological concepts in Sogdian is that they are nearly always compound nouns.

⁶²⁷ ‘soli-linguistic’ here is used in line with the meaning of *ius soli* (law of the soil) a term describing that nationality derives from the soil in which person is born. This term is often used in mapping and documenting linguistic diversity in multicultural societies, such as European Union, Central Asia, where the ‘soli-linguistic’ is understood to designate the ‘language of the soil’. When Sogdian translators devised certain mechanisms to translate the Syriac texts they operated according to how their own language functioned. Thus the new vocabularies ‘coined’ in the process of the translation are not accidental, but deliberate and manifest the cognitive effect of Christianity in both the language and its carriers. For discussion of the terminology see EXTRA *et al*, 2008, pp. 3-42.

Examples of the ‘Christian’ vocabularies of the Sogdian Christian texts

a) Theological Expressions

God

The term used to designate God in Sogdian is *by-*. This term as demonstrated by Walter Henning, in Sogdian is also used as an honorific term meaning ‘Lord, Sir, Excellency’. Sims-Williams has subsequently demonstrated that this term was sometimes used as a specific designation of Mithra, one of the main Sogdian-Zoroastrian deities known from both written sources and works of art.⁶²⁸ “Yet at the same time Sogd. *by-* continued as designation of the ancient divinities, and the representatives of monotheistic religions, as Christian missionaries, used it of ‘God’ with a capital letter.”⁶²⁹ Etymologically, *by-* belongs to the verbal root *bag* ‘to distribute, allot’ and may be equated with *bhāga-*, an Old Indian divine epithet probably meaning ‘dispenser; generous one’. However, in Sogdian Christian texts, this term is used exclusively to render Syriac ܐܠܗܐ *alāhā*- ‘God’. The only, possibly, example where the Syriac *alāhā* in Sogdian Christian is used is *the story of Daniel*.

a) *fryw qwnt' xypθ'wnt 'lh' s'r cn 'γty m'n ZY cn 'γty z'wr. cn s't šy' ZY cn s't m'n*

“Love the Lord God with (your) whole mind and with (your) whole strength, with all (your) intelligence and with all (your) mind”⁶³⁰

One of the most frequent attestations of the word *by-* is in phrase ‘Lord God’.

a) *xwtw by'-* ‘Lord God’⁶³¹

b) *xwt'w xwt'w z'wrqyn xwšywny by'*. ‘Lord, Lord, mighty king (and) God’⁶³²

Other related theological terms with *by'-*root are *by'nyq-* ‘divine, of God’ e.g. *by'nyq šyr'qty'-* ‘Divine Grace’⁶³³ and *byy'qy'-* ‘divinity’ e.g. *tw' byy'qy'-* ‘Thy Divinity’.⁶³⁴

The expression of *byy ptry* ‘Father God’- is also common, which usually translates Syriac ܒܐ. ⁶³⁵

Lord

⁶²⁸ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1991, pp.176-186.

⁶²⁹ HENNING, 1965, pp. 242-254.

⁶³⁰ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2013, pp.76 E29/R8-9 commentary to the fragment in pp. 91 indicated that in this example the Sogdian word *m'n* ‘mind’ is used to translate Syriac words *lb'* ‘heart’ and *r'yn* ‘mind’. Otherwise, the word for heart in Christian Sogdian, particularly on the evidence of C2, is *žy'wr*. For relevant references see SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp.238. It is of interest to note that under the entry for ‘heart’ in GHRAIB, 1995 four out of nine entries are given to be known from the Manichean usage.

⁶³¹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp.37 fragment 12R1.

⁶³² SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp.39 fragment 12V14.

⁶³³ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 113 fragment 57R3.

⁶³⁴ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp.39 folio 12V17.

⁶³⁵ BARBATI, 2009, doctoral thesis, unpublished, pp. 252.

The term translating ‘Lord’, as seen in above examples of ‘Lord God’ is *xwtw*. In Christian texts *xwtw* is used both in connection with ‘God’ e.g. *xwtw by-* and Jesus- *xwt’w yšwγ* ‘Lord Jesus’.

The term *xwtw* occurs with different spellings: *xwt’w* and *xwd’w*. Similarly to *by’*, this term in Sogdian is widely used both addressing humans and ‘divines’. In Sogdian Christian texts, *xwtw* ‘Lord’ is a ‘regular addition’ used in connection with Jesus’ name and is especially evident in the lectionary fragments where a Syriac Gospel verse is followed by its Sogdian translation. For example, in C5 the following is attested:

- a. Syriac: *’mr yšw’ [ltl](m)ydwhy* ‘Jesus spoke to his disciples’
Sogdian: *w’nw frm’y xwt’w yšwγ qw xypθ [ž]wxšqt’ s’* ‘So spoke the Lord Jesus to his disciples’⁶³⁶
- b. Syriac: *’mr yš[w’] ltlmydwh(y)* ‘Jesus spoke to his disciples’
Sogdian: *w’nw fr’m’y xwt’w y(š)wγ qw xypθ žwxšqt[’] s’* ‘So spoke the Lord Jesus to his disciples’⁶³⁷

Regarding the use of *xwtw* (including its other spelling variations) in Sogdian Christian texts, Martin Schwartz points out that it always translates the Syriac word *mry’* as ‘Lord’.⁶³⁸ This usage of the word is also confirmed in the lectionary C5, where *xwt’w* consistently translates Syriac *mry’*, which “is used alone or with *’lh’* “God” but not with *yšw’*.”⁶³⁹ The spelling *xwd’w* is attested in E8, a liturgical text for the commemoration of the departed.

Since *xwt’w* is not used in the Syriac texts where Sogdian uses it, one can argue that *xwtw* ‘Lord’ with ‘Jesus’ is a feature of the cultural influence of Sogdian on the textual tradition. However, its exact implications on the social and religious perception levels cannot be determined for certain.

Another term translating ‘Lord’ in Sogdian is *xypθ’wnt*, which as evident in the below example, is also used in common with *xwtw*.

- a. *nyny ’t mdw qy pryw m’x xypθ’wnt yšwγ mšyh’ tmp(’)[r]*
[’]t ywxny r’z xcy. šwšp’ qy sqyp’r cn pyls’ ’t ks’ xšnyrq
xcy nd(yw)yd snqy qy ’w(s)tty (b)’ pr xwtw yšwγ frwrtqt(y) dbrw.

⁶³⁶ BARBATI, 2010, pp. 3. A sentence from the Gospel of Mathew 10:15.

⁶³⁷ BARBATI, 2010, pp. 4. A sentence from the Gospel of Mathew 16:24.

⁶³⁸ SCHWARTSZ, 1967.

⁶³⁹ BARBATI, 2010, pp. 7.

The bread and wine upon it is a mystery Our Lord Jesus Christ' body and blood. The veil over the paten and chalice is a sign of that stone which was placed upon the door of the Lord Jesus's tomb.⁶⁴⁰

In the above example there are two different words used in relation to Jesus; *xypθ'wnt* which is used in connection with 'Jesus Christ'; and *xwtw* which is used when Jesus' name is not followed by his 'title' Christ.

In the above and other similar contexts, this designation of the word 'Lord' by two distinct terms *xwtw* and *xypθ'wnt* may be understood as a 'stylistic device'; that is the use of these words as synonyms to avoid repetition. Furthermore, this signifies the translator's awareness and knowledge of different Sogdian words that can convey theological concepts accurately.

In addition to Sogdian Christian texts *xypθ'wnt* is also used in Manichean texts, and similarly to *xwtw* it has different spelling variations, such as *xypδ'wnd*. This term is not common in Sogdian Buddhist texts. Depending on the contexts in which this term is used, it can mean 'ruler', 'king', and 'the Lord'. The application and usage of the term is comparable to the earlier mentioned *xwtw*.

Christ, Jesus Christ and Messiah

As with other personal names (Syriac, Greek, and Hebrew) including Jesus and his 'title' in Sogdian Christian texts is represented by transliteration from the Syriac *yšwγ* 'Jesus' and *yšwγmšyḥ* 'Jesus Christ'.⁶⁴¹

In connection with this it is noteworthy to mention that the Syriac term that is directly related to the word Christ ܕܡܫܝܚ [kristia'naia] (Greek χριστιανος) is not attested in Sogdian. Instead, Sogdian Christian texts employs the word *trs'q-* an expression deriving from Pahlavi *tarsāg* (root *trs-* 'to fear') to denote the word 'Christian'. This word is also attested in

⁶⁴⁰ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp.113, fragment 57R18-20.

⁶⁴¹ For particular fragments in C2, see SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 236. For other attestation, see GHARIB, 1995, entries 5497, 2235, 11014, 11015, and 1120. As SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1988, pp. 146 pointed out personal and geographical names in Sogdian Christian texts are "usually adapted with their Syriac spellings unchanged". However, if there was another form of spelling already established the geographical and personal names are given in 'their Sogdian form', for example the Middle Persian personal name Šāhdōst found in the martyr text-both in Syriac and Sogdian versions. SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp.147 pointed out that the Sogdian translation of this Middle Persian name (Šāhdōst 'Friend of the king' (Syriac *rḥm mlk*' and Sogdian *xwšywny fry*)) may have been influenced by the word order of the Middle Persian; that is *xwšywny fry*, though *fri-* is otherwise usually the first element in compounds. Another established geographical name as pointed in SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1988, pp. 16 is *frwm-* 'Rome'. Similarly, SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp.149 cites an observation by Gershevitch related to the name of the Sasanian capital city Tesifon, which in the Syriac version is given as *qṭyspwn*. However, the Sogdian version does not reproduce this historical form, but replaces it by a form *tyspwn*, which indicates the great familiarity of the Sogdian translator with the actual Middle Persian form of the place name.

expression *n'trs'qy* - 'non-Christians', an adjective *trs'q'ny* 'of the Christians' e.g. *trs'q'ny byy* 'God of the Christians'⁶⁴² and *trs'qy* 'Christianity'.

Possibly the only other instance where the expression is used to translate the Syriac *dhlw̄hy d-mry* 'fearers of God' is that Psalm 22:24 [*xwt'w βγγ t](r)s'kt* "O fearers of the Lord God" translates Syriac *dhlw̄hy d-mry*.⁶⁴³

Like many other Middle Persian words used in the Sogdian Christian texts this particular vocabulary is indicative of the interrelationship of Sogdian and Middle Persian Christian literature. In addition, this term has anthropological implication, namely it is used to differentiate a religious identity of an individual.

Christians of the Sassanid Empire, as Sebastian Brock has shown, were referred to by the 'outsiders', such as Zoroastrian High priest Kartir, as *nasraya* and *kristiyan*.⁶⁴⁴ In Kartir's inscription "the differentiation in terminology refers to two groups of different geographical origin, and of different cultural allegiance" that is *nasraya* designates the local/native and *kristiyan* the 'expat' Christians.⁶⁴⁵ In contrary to the *nasraya*, a designation usually applied to the local Christians by the non-Christian outsiders', the local Christians in Persia before the fifth century, may have self-identified by the term *mšhaye* 'Christ-like'.⁶⁴⁶ The *mšhaye* was than subsequently displaced under the influence of the Antiochene tradition in the Church of the East of the Sassanid Empire from early fifth century, when "the term *kristyane* came to be used of all Christians, irrespective of their origin [and] *nasraya* evidently gained, in Christian eyes, distinctly pejorative overtones."⁶⁴⁷

The above discussion makes it explicit that the adoption of certain self-identifying term by the Christians in Sassanid Era had sociological (theological and political) reasons. This raises the question whether the use of Middle Persian *trs'q* by Sogdian Christians was also conditioned by a similar situation. It is clear that Greek expression *kristyane* (in Syriac adjustment) epitomized the intrinsic relationship of Persian, Syriac and Greek-speaking Christians. Perhaps, this symbolic virtue of the term was also found in the word *trs'q*.

Samuel Lieu has opined that the term by which Christianity was known in medieval China i.e. *Jingjiao* 景教 and is traditionally translated as the 'Luminous Religion' may be a

⁶⁴² SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp.44 folio 23R28.

⁶⁴³ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2013, pp.20 with commentary in pp. 41.

⁶⁴⁴ BROCK, 1975, pp. 80-108, the study of these two words in pp. 91-95.

⁶⁴⁵ BROCK, 1975, pp. 92. Christians who were brought to Persia as result of the war and were Greek speaking.

⁶⁴⁶ BROCK, 1975, pp. 94. Aphrahat writing in the mid-fourth century uses the term to gloss the word *kristyane* used in the book of Acts 11:26. Considering that he used the word *mšhaye* to define the *kristyane* makes it clear that at that time *kristyane* was not widely used or known in Persia.

⁶⁴⁷ BROCK, 1975, pp. 94-95.

homophonal calque for *trs'q*.⁶⁴⁸ In chapter one, it was pointed out that at the time when official decree for propagation of Christianity was granted to the Church of the East, Sogdians were one of the sizable Iranian-speaking minority in the Chinese soil. Further, as it was said considering the Bactrian (Balkh) origin of Mar Yazedbouzid, it is possible that Sogdians were some of his primary co-workers in converting China to Christianity. These considerations, at least indirectly, point to the fact that *trs'q* was introduced to the Chinese Christian circle as was *kristyane* into Persia, where the main missionary force may have been educated in Greek, but were of Syriac ethnicity.

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit (the third Person of the Trinity) in Sogdian Christian texts is designated by a compound phrase constructed of adjective *zpṛt* 'pure, holy' and noun *w't* 'wind, spirit'. In Sogdian Christian texts the word holy is also attested as loan word *qdyš* e.g. *šy p(r)tw qdyš* 'the three times 'Qaddiš'.⁶⁴⁹

a) *zpṛt w't pṛ() qpwtyc(y)[/](m'n)[wqy']*. 'The Holy Spirit in the likeness of a dove'⁶⁵⁰

b) *[xwm'r]-w'bw zpṛt w't*. 'Advocate the Holy Spirit'⁶⁵¹

In example b) *zpṛt w't* 'Holy Spirit' follows a partially-attested compound. Judging from the lacuna, it has been suggested that the missing word was *xwm'r* – 'consolation', which in this particular context would translate Advocate or Paraclete, an attribute of the Holy Spirit. In Syriac the Paraclete is attested in its Greek transliteration *Παράκλητος*.⁶⁵²

The best example containing the theological formulary of the 'Sogdian Christianity' is the Nicene Creed.⁶⁵³ The Nicene Creed was a document of great importance, from a theological perspective. The authority of the Synod of Nicea was affirmed by first Synod of the Church of the East held in 410 CE.⁶⁵⁴ The significant theological implication of the document is also demonstrated by the fact that it was codified in both Sogdian language and Sogdian cursive script, which (as was pointed out earlier) was possibly known in the large social context than the adapted Syriac. Presence of the text expressing the core belief of the Christian church in the format (language and script) accessible and familiar to majority indicates strong

⁶⁴⁸ LIEU, 2009, pp. 227-245; *ibid*, 2013, pp. 123-140.

⁶⁴⁹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp.114 folio 57R 29; *ibid*, 1988, pp.151.

⁶⁵⁰ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp.94 folio 53R5

⁶⁵¹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp.102 folio 54V15. For the restoration see 2012, pp. 111.

⁶⁵² The term Paraclete (loanword from Greek) in Sogdian is known in Manichean usage. In Syriac it is used to denote both the Paraclete-Holy Spirit as well as for intercessor, or advocate, thus retaining the Greek semantics.

⁶⁵³ E17 according to the recent catalogue edition. MÜLLER, 1913, pp. 84-8, with photos of the fragment on Taf. I-II.

⁶⁵⁴ CHABOT, 1902, pp. 253-275.

intentions toward the localization (indigenization) of Christianity into Sogdian society, which remained largely multi-religious until its conquest by Islam.

Baptism

The word used to translate ‘baptism’ in Sogdian Christian texts is *sn’m*.

- a. [*xyd*] *qy w’btq dynd’r qt sn’m pcy’ztq t’nm’n:*
[*t ny w’b*] *tq qt sn’m θbr’msq*

That (fact) that the priest says: ‘So and so receives baptism’ and does not say: ‘I baptize’.⁶⁵⁵

Similar to the Syriac term ܡܕܝܬܐ [ma‘mudīthā] stemming from root ܡܕܝܬܐ, “to bathe, wash”; the Sogdian word also means ‘washing’, as exemplified by the phrase *dynd’rty dsty sn’m* ‘the washing of the hands of the priest’ attested in the line 13 of the same folio where the above example was taken from.⁶⁵⁶ Accordingly, the particular ‘ritualistic’ meaning of the term (the sacrament of baptism) depends solely on the context where it is used. The verb to ‘baptize’ in Sogdian is formed from *sn’m* ‘washing’ + *θbr* ‘give’. The particular phenomenon to note here is the semantic shift of the word from ‘regular wash’ into ‘ritual wash’.

In Sogdian texts there are other examples demonstrating the semantic shifts; such as *ps’yδw* from usual meaning of ‘fail, stint, restriction’ as indicated in the recently published Sogdian Christian hymn translates Syriac *bḡšt* - ‘evil deeds’; that shows a semantic shift from regular failing to moral failing i.e. sin.⁶⁵⁷

Mystery/Eucharist

The Eucharist in Sogdian Christian texts is translated by two words: *r’z*’ (𐰽𐰺𐰍) and *qwrbn*’ (𐰽𐰺𐰍𐰆). Although etymologically *r’z*’ is Iranian, however as indicated by the final ‘ā’ it may have entered Sogdian from Syriac. The Sogdian equivalent of the expression is *r’z*, which means a ‘secret, mystery or symbol’.⁶⁵⁸ The borrowing of this word from its Syriac usage maybe suggests that *r’z* in its Iranian context may not had the same special meaning; namely Eucharist, but rather was a generic word designating mystery or secret.

⁶⁵⁵ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 113 fragment 57R1-2.

⁶⁵⁶ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 113 fragment 57R13.

⁶⁵⁷ SIMS-WILLIAMS, forthcoming. The commentary of the text there also includes other examples and references as well.

⁶⁵⁸ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 224.

Heaven/Paradise

The concept of heaven/paradise in Sogdian Christian texts is translated by the following terms: *wštm'x*, *bwstn* and *sm'n*. Of these three *wštm'x* conveys the meaning of 'heavenly realm' and *sm'n* conveys the meaning of 'sky'. Both are also attested in Manichean and Buddhist Sogdian texts. On the other hand *bwstn* means paradise in the sense of 'garden'. For example, 'xz()tr' tys qw bwstn 'Arise go enter into Paradise'⁶⁵⁹

The Sogdian word *wštm'x* (in Manichean Sogdian once spelled *wyštm'x*, in Middle Persian *whyšt'w* and in New Persian *bihišt*) etymologically relates to the Avestan *vahištəm ahūm* < *vahišta* (*ahu*) '(best) existence', according to Zoroastrian cosmogony. As exemplified in the Bundahišn, *vahišt garō-δamān ī auhramazd* "vahišt (is) the 'House of Welcome' of Ahura Mazdā."⁶⁶⁰ In the Avesta this term occurs in Y. 16.7- *vahištəm ahūm ašaonqm yazamaide* 'the Best Existence of the *ašavans* we worship'.⁶⁶¹ The Avestan *vahišta*- in the form of (ə)*xušt* 'best' (with 'x' for 'h', as opposed to **wəšt(-māx)*, i.e. 'Ø' for 'h'), is also attested in the only Sogdian Zoroastrian text, the *ašəm vohū* prayer (Yasna 27.14).⁶⁶²

Furthermore, the relationship of Sogdian *wštm'x* with the *vahištəm ahūm* is assumed on the basis that many Old Iranian phrases and compounds merge together. Consequently, the Sogdian *wštm'x* may have resulted from the merging of the bipartite phrase *vahištəm ahūm* into a single word. In addition, *wštm'x* exhibits the usual dropping of 'h' between 'a' and 'i'- a feature observed in Sogdian.

In C2 *wštm'x* is used, on several occasions, together with adverb *sm'ncyq* 'heavenly', For example, *sm'n[cyq wš]/tm'x qy nwystyt xnt ws* 'the heavenly kingdom whither they have been invited'⁶⁶³ or *npwlwsy sm'ncyq wštm'xy dn (m')[x xypθ'wnt prw]* 'Paul in the kingdom of Heaven with Our Lord'.⁶⁶⁴

The 'compound' use of *sm'ncyq wštm'x* in the light of the etymological connection of the *wštm'x* with the Zoroastrian 'eschatological' concept of 'heaven' (*vahištəm ahūm*); as well as the prevalence of knowledge of Zoroastrian theological concepts in Sogdiana, may be

⁶⁵⁹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 91 fragment 51V11.

⁶⁶⁰ BAILEY 1988, pp. 62.

⁶⁶¹ GERSHEVITCH 1967, pp. 154. In Avesta, Y 44.2 this term is attested as *vahištō aṇhuš*.

⁶⁶² On the basis of the presence of different linguistic influences in the Avesta discussed by HOFFMANN & NARTEN, 1989 the phonetic deviation of *vahišta* as (ə)*xušt* suggests HINTZE 1998, pp.155-156 resulted from Avestan text being subjected to the influence of Sogdian. That is pronunciation adapted into local spoken Sogdian.

⁶⁶³ SIMS-WILLIAMS 1985, pp. 89 fragment 48V14-15.

⁶⁶⁴ SIMS-WILLIAMS 1985, pp. 82 fragment 48R9.

understood to convey the same meaning in Christian texts.⁶⁶⁵ In other words, *sm'ncyq wštm'x* 'Heavenly Kingdom' is a 'House of Welcome' of God.⁶⁶⁶ In which case other expressions used can be considered to be generic word for 'heaven' but not necessarily heaven as theological concept i.e. afterlife. In C2 the word *sm'n* is used only once in the context of dying and going to Heaven- that is heaven as afterlife.⁶⁶⁷

The phrase [*'rwxšn']|yr(d)mn* literary meaning 'Light Paradise' in recently identified epistle fragment is of interest to note here.

7 *qw bgy ptry [s'r qy mnd 'yžnd]*

8 *qθ'rt 't pt(r)[q'n dn]*

9 *šyrqtyt pr'w [pr 'rwxšn']-*

10 *yr(d)mn.*

'May you give thanks] to God the Father, [who] has made [us worthy] and [has given us a share in the] in[heritance] with the saints [in] Paradise'

The Syriac text of the verse has "who has made us worthy of a share of the inheritance of the saints in the light".

As Sims-Williams points out this is a well-attested Zoroastrian term in Manichean Sogdian texts. As appears from the context "it is used as an explanatory translation of Syr. *nwhr* 'light' [designating the Paradise]".⁶⁶⁸

Hell

The eschatological concept of 'hell' in Sogdian Christian texts, similarly to the aforementioned concept of heaven, is translated by the word *tm-*. This word is etymologically related to Avestan *təmah* literally meaning 'darkness' and thus can be designated as inherited concept from Zoroastrianism in Sogdian Christian.

a. *tr' 'ms' w(n)' pr tmw* – 'Go pay heed to hell'⁶⁶⁹

This term is also attested in Manichean and Buddhist texts, due to the cultural circumstances and contexts of operation of these religions.⁶⁷⁰ Although it is possible that in each of these

⁶⁶⁵ BENVENISTE, 1964, pp. 87 notes that in Chorasmian Turkish this word, a loanword from Sogdian, is attested as *uštmaq/učmaq*. This words were probably first adopted into Old Turkish (Uighur), however, it cannot be determined whether it was inherited from Manichean or Christian usage.

⁶⁶⁶ BARBATI, 2009, pp. 199 reports that "“il regno dei cieli”. Cf.sogd. <[sm'ncy]q wštm'x> e sir. <mlkwt' dšmy>. Ho notato che in questo lezionario il siriano <mlkwt'> "regno" è tradotto con <wštm'x> per indicare il "regno celeste" e con <xšywnqy> per indicare il "regno terreno". Tale distinzione è presente anche in altri testi sogdiani cristiani ed è sempre mantenuta in C 5."

⁶⁶⁷ SIMS-WILLIAMS 1985, pp.126 folio 60R6-7.

⁶⁶⁸ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2013, pp. 68 commentary in pp. 72.

⁶⁶⁹ SIMS-WILLIAMS 1985, pp.92 fragment 51V26.

⁶⁷⁰ For reference to other texts where it is attested see GHARIB, 1995 entry 9588.

religions based on their individual eschatological perspectives these concepts were understood differently, it is however, hard to comment specifically on this.

Tomb/Graveyard

Related to the concepts of heaven and hell is that of tomb and/or graveyard. One of the frequently used Sogdian word for tomb is *frwrtqty* a (determinative) compound *frwrty* ‘corpse’⁶⁷¹ with *qty* ‘house, tomb’ (*-*katak* ‘house’; Avestan *kata-*, Middle Persian *kadag*).

In the examples attested in C2 this word translates both Syriac ܒܝܬܡܝܬ [byt myt] ‘house of the dead’ and *qbr* ‘grave (earth grave)’. However, the Syriac phrase *byt myt* ‘house of the dead’ by *frwrtqt* in C2 is rendered only once. In other examples *frwrtqt* translates *qbr* ‘grave’. Compare below the Syriac original and its Sogdian translation.

- a. *mdbh xcy m(šy)h’ frwrtqty* “the altar is in place of Christ’s tomb...” – Syriac *mdbh’ dyn ’ytwwhy dwkt qbrh d-mšyḥ’* ‘...tomb of the messiah’⁶⁷²
- b. *pr xwtw yšwy frwrtqt(y) dbrw* “upon the door of the Lord Jesus’ tomb” – Syriac *mn qbrh d-prwqn* “...from the tomb of Our Saviour”⁶⁷³
- c. [*sn’](m)nty qy cn wzn’*. *xšnyrq xcy xwtw yšwy sn’mnty [qy](c)n [frwrtq](t)’* (text restored)
 “the rising from the font is a sign of the Lord Jesus’ rising from the tomb” – Syriac *qymth d-mrn yšw’ d-mn qbr’* “the rising of Our Lord Jesus from the tomb”⁶⁷⁴
- d. *w’nc’nw ms xwtw yšwy prymnt (šy) n’m ž(γ)yr’mnty z’wr ’xšt cn frwrtqt’ ’t sty qw (s)m(’)ny s’*.
 “the Lord Jesus ... arose from the tomb and ascended to heaven.” – Syriac *mn byt myt’* “from the house of the dead”⁶⁷⁵

The word *frwrtqt* ‘the house of the dead’ is also identical to another Sogdian word *mwrt’sp’nc-* ‘corpse hotel’ that Ilya Gershevitch opined to be “an accurate enough definition of a cemetery.”⁶⁷⁶ However, there are several different words in Sogdian, which have been understood to mean ‘grave’, such as *zy-qnty* (literally ‘earth-dug’)⁶⁷⁷; *sqsyt* the singular of which is attested in Mount Mugh document B-8 as *’sks’k*, which too translates Syriac *qbr* ‘

⁶⁷¹ An example for *frwrty* ‘corpse’, is found in SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 144 fragment 68V6-7 *’t xyd wyd xšp’ pt(yx)ryn x’n’ wrnqyn ’ync cn w’cn dw’ dw’ mrt’y nwyspny frwrty* ‘and on that very night that believing woman hired from the market two men each to every corpse’.

⁶⁷² SIMS-WILLIAMS 1985, pp. 113 fragment 57R17, the corresponding Syriac pp. 119 §27.

⁶⁷³ SIMS-WILLIAMS 1985, pp. 113-114 fragment 57R20, the corresponding Syriac pp. 119 §29.

⁶⁷⁴ SIMS-WILLIAMS 1985, pp. 113 fragment 57R5, the corresponding Syriac pp. 118 §16.

⁶⁷⁵ SIMS-WILLIAMS 1985, pp. fragment 57R10, the corresponding Syriac pp. 118 §21.

⁶⁷⁶ GERSHEVITCH, 1976, p. 209-210.

⁶⁷⁷ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 185.

‘grave’.⁶⁷⁸ The word *sksy* is also attested in the phrase *(sk)s(y)δ[βr]y* ‘the door of a tomb’ in the fragment containing the Psalm 5, which as pointed out by Sims-Williams “paraphrases Syr. qbr’ ptyh’ “open graves/tombs”, [and thus] demonstrates clearly that, for the translator of this Psalm, *sksy* could denote a “tomb” or “sepulchre”, not only a “grave”.⁶⁷⁹

Satan

Satan, in the codex C2, is translated by the word *šmnw*, which as Sims-Williams pointed out stems from an unattested Avestan term **aśā mainiuš* ‘the worse spirit’ and in meaning is identical to the Buddhist, Zoroastrian and Manichean word for ‘devil’.⁶⁸⁰ In Sogdian Christian texts a related word to the earlier attested is *šmnq’ny* [šamnkānē] ‘devilish’.⁶⁸¹ Further, it is also attested in phrase *šmnw žynt-* ‘devil’s messenger’.⁶⁸²

Grace

The theological concept of ‘grace’ in Sogdian Christian texts is translated by *šyr’qty*. Other related words with ‘grace’ attested in codex C2 are: *šyr* ‘good, excellent’, *šyrqty* ‘virtuous, righteous’, *šyry* ‘what is good, blessing’.⁶⁸³

- a. *pcprty pryw by’nyq šyr’qty’ ’t (wyny)[šw]’mc (z)’ wrqyn bwt pr zprrt w’t* ‘Grace rests upon him and his conduct becomes strong in the Holy Spirit’⁶⁸⁴
- b. *pr m’x (xy)[pθ’wnt ’t byy ’t bwcny] yšwy mšyh’ šyr[’q]ty’* ‘By the grace of our Lord and God and saviour Jesus Christ’⁶⁸⁵

Another term attested in Sogdian Christian texts that translates ‘grace’ is *y’n θbr’qy* a compound phrase composed of *y’n* < Old Iranian *yāna* ‘mercy, grace, favour’ and the abstract noun from verbal root *θbr-* ‘to give’.

- a. *pr mšyh’ y’n θbr’qy’* ‘By the Grace of Christ’.⁶⁸⁶
- b. *’r xyd prywyd zprrt w’ty y’n θbr’qy’* ‘and by that same Grace of the Holy Spirit’⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁷⁸ MACKENZIE, 1970, pp. 118-119, defining it as ‘raised tomb, tumulus’ wants to see in this word a base *’sk-* ‘high’, comparing Choresmian *sks-* ‘be raised, high’, and thus *nym’kw* *’sks’k* would specify a ‘deep tomb’ or ‘grave’ in contrast to *’sks’k* ‘raised tomb’ as in Greek *τύμβος* < **IE** **tu-* ‘swell’. GERSHEVITCH, 1976, pp. 195-196 postulates the phonetic realization as *æskase*.

⁶⁷⁹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2013, pp. 12, commentary in pp. 35 the phrase is found in Psalm 5R15.

⁶⁸⁰ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2000, pp. 11-12.

⁶⁸¹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 37 fragment 12R4.

⁶⁸² SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 82 fragment 48R17.

⁶⁸³ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 227.

⁶⁸⁴ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 129 fragment 61R22-23.

⁶⁸⁵ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 162 fragment 91V4-8.

⁶⁸⁶ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 71 fragment 31V25.

⁶⁸⁷ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 102 fragment 54 V21-22.

Other semantically related term to the above worth mentioning is *'frywn* – ‘blessing’ (verb form *'fryn/'fryt*).⁶⁸⁸ The term *'frywn* is also known in Manichean Sogdian texts.

Salvation

The word translating ‘salvation’ in Sogdian Christian texts is *wxš'mnty* deriving from the Sogdian verb *wxš* ‘to save’. Accordingly, the word for ‘Saviour’ is usually used in connection with Jesus’ name is *wxšny* (pres. part. noun). For example, *xwtw yšw(γ) m'x wxšnw* ‘The Lord Jesus our saviour’.⁶⁸⁹ The other term designating Saviour in C2 codex is *bwcny* (the example given above) from verb root *bwc-* ‘to save’.⁶⁹⁰

Resurrection and Ascension

In C2 there are two different words used to translate the Syriac *ܩܝܡܬܐ* [qiamat] - ‘resurrection’. These are *'xz'mnty* that is formed from the verbal root *'xz-* ‘to rise’ and *qymθ*'.

- a. *mwrtty 'xz'mnty* ‘the resurrection of the dead’⁶⁹¹
- b. *'xz'mnty žmnw* ‘the time of the resurrection’⁶⁹²
- c. *w'n-c'n 'xšt m'x [xypθ'wnt yšwy] mšyh' cn mwrt'-d'm (p)[r xypθ ptr](y) γwbdy*. ‘Just as Our [Lord Jesus] Christ arose from the realm of the dead i[n] the glory of [His Father]’⁶⁹³
- d. *mšyh' 'xšt c[n mwrt'](')-d'm*. ‘Christ arose from the realm of the dead’⁶⁹⁴
- e. *qwdš qy qymθ' xšpy* ‘the consecration on the Eve of the Resurrection’⁶⁹⁵

The use of *'xz'mnty* and *qymθ*' in folio 57V10, 11 is interesting. In the first instance i.e. 57V10 *qymθ*' is used to refer the ‘eve of Resurrection’ but in 57V11 *'xz'mnty* is used to designate the ‘time of the Resurrection *'xz'mnty (n)γ'my*. It is unlikely that these two different vocabularies were meant to denote two different aspects of the Resurrection as an eschatological event i.e. the eve and the day or time, but could be possible that were understood as synonyms and we used to avoid repetition of the same word.

It maybe also possible that *qymθ*' was understood to imply ‘Easter’- in the sense of name of festival (Syriac *ܩܝܡܬܐ ܕܥܝܬܐ* [ida'gura]). However, the examples *c* and *d* where the verb *'xz-*

⁶⁸⁸ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 203.

⁶⁸⁹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 142 fragment 64V4.

⁶⁹⁰ As indicated in GHARIB, 1995, entries 2874-2876 the similar meaning of the word are attested also in Manichean texts.

⁶⁹¹ SIMS-WILLIAMS 1985, pp. 156 fragment 77V16.

⁶⁹² SIMS-WILLIAMS 1985, pp. 80 fragment 40R23.

⁶⁹³ Pauline lectionary E32/1, lines 12-14, for edition of the text see SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2013, pp.64.

⁶⁹⁴ An Epistle Lectionary from Toyoq, line 13. The edition of the text is found in SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2013, pp.66.

⁶⁹⁵ SIMS-WILLIAMS 1985, pp.115 fragment 5TV10.

‘to rise’ is used to designate the resurrection of Christ, affirms that the *’xz’mnty* is a Sogdian *termini technici* designating Resurrection.

In Sogdian another word for ‘resurrection’ is *mwrt’zw’nt*, a compound noun formed from *mwrt* ‘dead’ and *zw’nty* ‘coming to life’.⁶⁹⁶

The word Ascension is formed from the verb denoting rising; *sn/st-* ‘to rise, ascend’. The actual noun is *sn’mnty* as exemplified in [*sn’](m)nty qy cn wzn* ‘the rising from the font’.⁶⁹⁷ This word is also used in connection with the Jesus’ ascension in the *Apostolic Cannons*’ fragment e.g. *xypθ sn’(m)nt* –‘His Ascension’.⁶⁹⁸ As attested in the calendar fragment E42, the *swlq*’ (phrase *swlq*’ *’γ’m*) in Sogdian was used to designate the ‘feast of the Ascension’.⁶⁹⁹

Judging from the context of the use of *sn’(m)nt*’ therefore it may be regarded as a technical term designating ‘Ascension’, as a specific theological event. This semantic shift from an ordinary word into a technical term was also observed in the previously mentioned word for baptism that is emerged from the regular word for ‘washing’.

b) Ecclesiological concepts

Church

The term used to translate ‘church’, (Syriac ܫܠܬܐ [*šlṯā*]) in Sogdian Christian texts is *’ncmn*.

- a. *’ncmny nwmt ’t (p)ts’qt* ‘Laws and ordinance of the Church’⁷⁰⁰
- b. *xypθ ’ncmnty* ‘Your Churches’⁷⁰¹
- c. *pty’mbrymync trsq’ny ’ncmn* ‘Apostolic Christian Church’.⁷⁰²

Sogdian *’ncmn*, as Gershevitch pointed out, is etymologically related to the Avestan *hanjamana*.⁷⁰³

⁶⁹⁶ References to the texts attested are found in GHARIB, 1995, entry 5543.

⁶⁹⁷ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 113 fragment 57R4.

⁶⁹⁸ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 103 fragment 55R27.

⁶⁹⁹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2012, pp. 188, DICKENS & SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2012, pp. 279.

⁷⁰⁰ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp.103 fragment 55R30.

⁷⁰¹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 94 fragment 55R22-23. Attested in prayer section of the homily ‘*On the final evil hour*’.

⁷⁰² MÜLLER, 1913, pp. 87.

⁷⁰³ GERSHEVITCH, 1954, pp. 8, 42. Another Sogdian term commonly used designating ‘assembly’ or ‘gathering’ in Buddhist Sogdian texts is *’nw’z*. See: GHARIB, 1995, entry 1165 and further. HANSEN, 1966, pp. 97 too indicated this word in the list of Sogdian vocabulary used in Sogdian Christian texts.

In Christian Sogdian texts, the word designating ‘general crowd’ gathering or multitude is *’w’zy*. In Christian texts this word is attested in compound form *’w’zqty* (‘assembly + house’) and translates Syriac *knwšt’* – ‘Synagogue’.⁷⁰⁴

Sogdian Christian texts thus has specific word to distinguish between the Jewish and Christian gathering place; in which case it may be assumed that *’ncmn* was a ‘technical’ word adopted to designate Christian gathering- the church. The only other term attested in Christian Sogdian to designate the ‘church’ is *dynd’ry’* - a compound word constructed from *dynd’r-* ‘priest, religious’ and Sogdian abstract suffix *-y’*. A similar construction is observed in the word [*’p/sqwpy*] ‘bishopric’. In this construction “the Sogdian abstract suffix *-y’* takes the place of Syr. *—ūθā.*”⁷⁰⁵

Priest and Bishop

The term translating ‘priest’ in Sogdian is *dynd’r*, a compound word formed from *dyn-* ‘religion’ and *d’r-* ‘to have’.

- a. [*xyd*] *qy w’btq dynd’r qt sn’m pcy’ztq t’nm’n:*
[*t ny w’b*] *tq qt sn’m θbr’msq*

That (fact) that the priest says: ‘So and so receives baptism’ and does not say: ‘I baptize’⁷⁰⁶

- b. *pr’(f)rywn wn’ dynd’rt ’t šy pd’rnyt-* ‘bless (its) priests and its bishops’⁷⁰⁷

The word for ‘bishop’ attested in example b) is *pd’rny*, which is formed from the present participle of the verb *pd’t/pd’rt* - ‘to sustain’.⁷⁰⁸ This term perhaps was constructed on practical grounds: that of function of the bishop as someone sustaining the church. However, if this word translates the Syriac *mdbrn’* then its basic meaning would be a “leader”.⁷⁰⁹

Another term for ‘bishop’ attested in Sogdian Christian text is *’psqwp* [əpəskupa], which is transliteration of Syriac ܥܦܫܩܘܦܐ (Greek: ἐπίσκοπος). In C2, this word is used in two different indeclinable forms as *psqpy* and *pswqpy*⁷¹⁰.

- a. *ḅrḅyšmyn psqpy* Barbašmin the bishop.⁷¹¹

⁷⁰⁴ SUNDERMAN, 1975, pp. 67, discussed in footnote 54.

⁷⁰⁵ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1988, pp. 155.

⁷⁰⁶ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 113 fragment 57R1-2.

⁷⁰⁷ Attested in prayer section of the homily ‘On the final evil hour’, SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 94 fragment 54R24.

⁷⁰⁸ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 219 (‘sustainer’ in fragment 14R21, pp.49, ‘sustained’ in fragment 57R13, pp.113).

⁷⁰⁹ SIMS-WILLIAMS personal communication.

⁷¹⁰ The form *pswqpy* is attested fragment 1R13 see SIMS-Williams, 1985, pp. 32.

These forms “differ in their ending as well as in the rest of their vocalism from the Syriac forms found elsewhere in Sogdian” in the following spellings *'psqwp'* and *'pysqwp'*.⁷¹² “The apocope of the initial vowel and especially the metathesis and loss of internal short vowel indicate that *pswqpy* belongs to an earlier stratum of [Syriac loan words into Sogdian].”⁷¹³ The phonetic modification of this word, however does not allow determining its immediate origin, whether Greek, Syriac or other intermediary.⁷¹⁴

Another term used to translate ‘priest’ or rather ‘Presbyter’ in Sogdian Christian texts is *msydr*.

The word *dynd'r* in C2 consistently translates Syriac ܟܚܢܐ [*kahna*] - ‘priest’. And the word *msydr* is used to translate ܩܫܝܫܐ [*qaššiša*]- ‘elder, priest’ “in accordance with its etymological meaning”.⁷¹⁵ Both of these words are attested in the rubrics of a bilingual baptismal rite (Syriac text with Sogdian rubrics): HT 88 and HT 66.⁷¹⁶ However, in the particular text that employs these two different words, it is difficult to discern which particular Syriac term is meant, *qaššiša* or *kahna*.⁷¹⁷ On the other hand the use of a Sogdian word as well as a Syriac loanword for ‘oil’ in the above text clearly demonstrates the ‘ritualistic’ distinction made by the translator between two kinds of oils. “The Syriac term has been kept for the ‘holy oil’ in the horn (already consecrated), whereas Sogdian is used for the oil (in the *laqna*) which is being consecrated for the pre-baptismal anointing.”⁷¹⁸

This particular point indicates that the choice of different vocabulary conveying the same or similar meanings was not just to avoid repetition, but had other semantics: namely, distinguishing between the ‘ritual’ categories in the example of oil here. Accordingly, the use of two different words for the ‘priest’ may have been for the same reason, such as distinguishing two different ranks of clergymen. The word *dynd'r* is also attested in Sogdian Buddhist and Manichean texts as well, which again indicates its Persian usage context.

⁷¹¹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp.144 fragment 68V12. The same spelling of the ‘bishop’ is attested in lines 13 and 22 of the fragment 77R16.

⁷¹² SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1988, pp. 156.

⁷¹³ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1988, pp. 156.

⁷¹⁴ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1988, pp. 156 suggest Middle Persian being a possible intermediary through which the assimilated words were borrowed into Sogdian (possibly in their Middle Persian forms).

⁷¹⁵ BROCK & SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2011, pp. 91.

⁷¹⁶ BROCK & SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2011, pp.81-92 (*dynd'r* - fragment 66V7; *msydr*- fragment 66R13, 66V4 and 88R3).

⁷¹⁷ In codex C2 both *dynd'r* and *msydr* are attested in their plural forms as well.

⁷¹⁸ BROCK & SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2011, pp.90.

Deacon

This ecclesiological office in Sogdian is designated by transliterated Syriac loan word ܫܡܫܐ [šm 'š]. However, in its plural form, šm 'š't 'deacons', it displays similar phonetic feature to the word 'pysqwp'yt 'bishops', which "is not clear whether these forms are merely graphic variants [of the regular plurals in -yt] or they are new plurals."⁷¹⁹ On the other hand, the 'Sogdianised' phonetic features of these words suggest them to have been known in Sogdian for long period of time, which again is obvious in their phonetic assimilation and the absence of their Sogdian 'equivalent'.

Apostle

In C2 the word 'Apostle', in the sense of the twelve Apostles of Christ, is consistently translated by *pty'mbry* which generally means 'a messenger, prophet'. The common word used for 'Apostle' in Syriac is ܫܠܝܗܐ [šliḥa], which like the Greek ἀπόστολος literary means 'one who is sent away' (Gk. στέλλω 'send' + από 'away from'). However, in Sogdian the word that is formed from the verb 'to send' is *fyšty* [freštē], which is used to translate 'angel' (Syriac ܡܠܐܝܟܐ [ma'laḥa]) not 'Apostle'.⁷²⁰ On the other hand, the Manichean *fyšig* (known in Parthian and Sogdian Manichean texts), formed from the verb *fyš* 'to send', designates the Manichean "Apostles".

It is interesting that although the word 'Apostle' in the attested fragments has a specific 'technical' meaning (i.e. the original 12 Apostles of Christ), in Sogdian the translator neither uses a loan word nor 'constructs' a new word.

Neophytes

The concept of a neophyte, as observed in the commentary on the baptismal and Eucharist liturgy, is translated by the word *n wyty*, a noun formed from adjective *nw-y-* 'new'.

c. *wrr' w's'my qy pr n wyty srw 'štytqn. pr*

6 ['](z)twny [qy p]c(γ)šd'rnt cn mš(yh) '.

(§17) The orarium, the veil on the head of the neophytes, indicates the liberty which they have received from Christ.⁷²¹

In this example, the word *n wyty*, as shown by the Syriac text, translates Syriac 'baptised ones' not those to be baptised.⁷²² Schwartz in this regard asserted that this particular

⁷¹⁹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1988, pp. 154.

⁷²⁰ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 211.

⁷²¹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 113 fragment 57R5-6.

⁷²² SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 113 footnote 21.

semantics of *nwyty* may be influenced by the concept of ‘baptism being rebirth’ that is becoming a ‘new person’.⁷²³

Scripture

The word used for ‘Scripture’ in Sogdian Christian texts is *pwsty*, which is a generic Sogdian word meaning ‘book’ or ‘written document’. This word is ultimately related to Old Persian *pavastā*, also attested in Parthian *pwstg* and Sanskrit *puṣṭaka*.

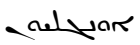
Another word for book attested in Sogdian Christian texts is *m’rdny*. However, this word has a different functional meaning, namely ‘book’ as a title or part of the scripture. For example, ‘Book of Kings’ - *xwšywnyty m’rdn*.⁷²⁴

Furthermore, as suggested by the phrase *wcync nwm* ‘Old (Law) Testament’ and *bywnyty pwstyt* ‘Books of Prophets’ certain books of Bible were also designated individually in Sogdian.⁷²⁵ However, *pwsty* depending on the context conveyed the comprehensive meaning of Scripture (Biblos). In C2 this term is used in connection with Gospel and Psalms, for example *mzmmwrty...pwsty ptfsy* ‘the Psalms and reading of Scriptures’.⁷²⁶

A related word with ‘scripture’ is *qryn* [karē/īnā] usually meaning ‘scripture reading’.⁷²⁷ In liturgical context, however the ‘reading’ (either scripture, or different parts of the service) was designated by the Persian word *x’nyš*- ‘read (ing)’.⁷²⁸ The latter is attested in E13, a funerary liturgical text with Sogdian rubrics. In this text (E13), another technical term attested is *pyw’q*- ‘response’. These ‘functional’ terms were used in a section of liturgy requiring a response from the congregation (exclamation or prayer). The word *x’nyš* is used for a section in liturgy that is sung (read) while sitting. Both these liturgical technical terms are Persian loanwords; however it is difficult to determine whether they carried such meanings prior to their use in Sogdian Christian literature.

The general word for reading in Sogdian Christian texts (outside the liturgical context) is *ptfs’mnty* deriving from verb *ptfs*- ‘to read’, thus *ptfsyny* ‘reader’.⁷²⁹

Gospel

Christian Sogdian texts use two distinct expressions to translate the word ‘Gospel’. These are *wnglywn*, which translates, or rather transcribes the Syriac  [evangelion], an

⁷²³ SCHWARTZ, 1967.

⁷²⁴ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 169 fragment 94V18-19.

⁷²⁵ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 103 fragment 55R28.

⁷²⁶ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp.71 fragment 31V17, 27.

⁷²⁷ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp.71 fragment 31V17.

⁷²⁸ DICKENS, 2009b, pp. 27.

⁷²⁹ Cf. ‘reading’ - fragment 54V30, ‘read’ - fragment 55R23, ‘reader’ - fragment 48R24.

ultimately Greek loanword in Syriac; and *mwžtybrqy* 'a native Sogdian term. The latter is compound noun formed from *mwžty* [mužtē] 'message, good news' and *βarakyā* 'bringing'. The noun *mwžty* is related to Parthian *mwjdg* of the same meaning.

- a. *w'stnt pty'mbryt qt cn s't pwstyty pšys' 'wnglywn ptfs'ty by. w'nc'nw t'py 'wstyny. 't c'nw p'dy sqwynt rmy šw ptywšynt p't wxš'mnty mwžty brqy' xcy ns't mrtxmyt(y).*

The apostles laid down that after all the Scriptures the Gospel should be read, as setting the seal, and the people should hear it while standing on the feet, because it is the gospel of salvation for all men.⁷³⁰

Related to the term Gospel (or generally New Testament) is that of Old Testament. This term as exemplified in phrase *wcync nwm 't bywnty pwstyt 't 'wngl(yw)n-* 'Old Testament and the books of Prophets and Gospel'⁷³¹ was conveyed by compound phrase *wcync* 'old' and *nwm* 'law'. The 'Christian' or rather religious connotation of the term 'law' here is also evident by its attestation in the phrase *'ncmny nwmt 't (p)ts'qt -* 'church laws and ordinances'.⁷³²

Font and Orarium

Both these liturgical furnishings of the church in Sogdian Christian texts are translated by Syriac loan words *wzn* 'font' and *wrr* 'orarium'.

- a. *[myd r'zt. sn'](m)nty qy cn wzn'. xšnyrq xcy xwtw yšwyy sn'mnty [qy](c)n [frwrtq](t)' wrr' w's'my qy pr nwyty srw 'štytqn. pr ['](z)twyny [qy p]c(γ)šd'rnt cn mš(yh)'.*

The rising from the font is a sign of the Lord Jesus' rising from the tomb. The orarium, the veil on the head of the neophytes, indicates the liberty which they have received from Christ.⁷³³

The unusual spelling of the *wrr* (in C2, also attested as *wṛṛ*) may indicate its full assimilation into Sogdian, a case comparable to the earlier mentioned words for 'bishop' and 'deacon'.⁷³⁴

⁷³⁰ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 103 fragment 55R22-25.

⁷³¹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 103, fragment 55R28.

⁷³² SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1985, pp. 103, fragment 55R30.

⁷³³ SIMS-WILLIAMS 1985, pp. 113 fragment 57R3-6.

⁷³⁴ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1988, pp. 154.

Altar

The word ‘altar’ in Sogdian Christian texts is translated by ܡܕܒܗ *mdbh*’ and *θrwnws*, one being of Syriac and the other of Greek origin. Although, *mdbh*’ is attested several times, the word *θrwnws* designating ‘altar’ is met only once.⁷³⁵

- e. *mdbh xcy m(šy)h’ frwrtqty* ‘the altar is in place of Christ’s tomb’⁷³⁶
- f. *mdbh’ sp’s* ‘the service of the altar’⁷³⁷

Conclusion

Sogdian Christian texts and ‘Sogdian Christianity’

In Sogdian Christian texts in the absence of suitable equivalents, such as personal and geographical names, certain concepts were translated using loanwords from Syriac. These are recognizable by their use of the characters *he*, *heth*, *kaph*, and *lamed* that are seldom used in words of Iranian origin. A few Syriac loan-expressions demonstrate complete assimilation into the Sogdian phonetic system. These are words that had undergone either partial or complete phonetic modification in Sogdian. Most Syriac loan words in Sogdian Christian texts retain their original spelling (usually transliterated).⁷³⁸ However, for some of the assimilated vocabularies, although their Syriac origin is recognizable, their phonetic reconstruction is not possible.

The use of Syriac outside the Mesopotamian boundaries where it was both the ‘church language’ and common language spoken by the populace, is principally connected with the spread of Christianity. That is, it was introduced by missionaries both in its spoken and written forms. Accordingly, despite their relatively small numbers, the assimilated Syriac words and other loanwords which were not calqued into Sogdian are significant lexical evidence for the long historical interaction between Sogdians and Christianity.

The historicity and cultural impact of Christianity in Sogdian culture is shown in particular by the use of indigenous religious expressions in translating Syriac Christian literature. As observed in Sogdian Christian texts, these are represented in three vocabulary categories:

- a) ‘ordinary’ words, namely expressions common throughout all types of religious texts in Sogdian, such as *by-* ‘God’ and *xwtw-* ‘Lord’;

⁷³⁵ Attested in the bilingual (Syriac text with Sogdian rubrics) liturgical text HT 66 line 14. Translation and edition found in BROCK & SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2011, pp. 81-92.

⁷³⁶ SIMS-WILLIAMS 1985, pp. 113 fragment 57R17, the corresponding Syriac pp. 119 §27.

⁷³⁷ SIMS-WILLIAMS 1985, pp.104 fragment 55V29.

⁷³⁸ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1988, pp. 153.

- b) 'constructed' vocabularies formed to convey specific Christian concepts, such as *mwžtybrqy*, a Sogdian term for the 'Gospel' formed from *mwžty* 'gospel' and *brqy* - 'bringing'.
- c) 'changed' vocabularies that suffered semantic change, such as *sn'm* 'washing' (used to translate 'Baptism'), or *sn'mnty* 'rising' (used to designate 'Ascension').

Additionally, Sogdian Christian texts also demonstrate knowledge of Middle Persian terminology. Considering the dominance of Zoroastrianism in Sogdiana and the relationship of some of the borrowed vocabulary with it, it is possible that these vocabularies prior their use in Sogdian Christian texts (or undergoing semantic change) were used and known in Sogdiana in either Zoroastrian i.e. religious or generic contexts.⁷³⁹

Although some of the terms used to translate Christian theological expressions are identical with those employed in Manichean, Buddhist or other Sogdian literature, this does not imply 'lexical syncretism'. These terms are used in specific contexts and thus it is possible that each of these religions developed its own terminology and vocabulary in Sogdian, meaningful for their audience and contexts. In addition, as Benveniste and Hansen have shown, the use of common vocabulary in Christian, Buddhist and Manichean texts in the Sogdian language is due to the co-existence of these religions and their use of one common language i.e. Sogdian, with its Iranian roots.⁷⁴⁰ In particular, this is significant in relation to the Sogdian Christian texts, as it clearly demonstrates that the Christian message was disseminated by the Persian-speaking (Pahlavi) missionaries, which also finds support in textual and epigraphic evidence discovered in (Western) Iran.

One point to be highlighted in this relation is that in contrast to the Manicheans, who fully absorbed and widely integrated their teachings with Buddhist and Christian apocryphal writings, the Sogdian church remained aloof from this pluralistic religious atmosphere. This is particularly evident in its borrowing of vocabulary from Syriac. Further, the terms that were possibly loaned from Manichaeism or Buddhism are bound to polemical contexts. For example, the expression *qrm-* 'evil deeds, fate' (which is etymologically Indian i.e. *karma*) is found only in the Christian polemic against the Manicheans. Accordingly, dictated by its context of use as well the fact that it is not attested anywhere else in Sogdian Christian texts,

⁷³⁹ Useful discussion on the subject in connection with the Sogdian literary sources is found in SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2000, pp.1-12, especially pp. 8-11.

⁷⁴⁰ BENVENISTE, 1964, pp. 85-91; HANSEN, 1966, pp. 96-102.

this term is probably directly borrowed from Manichean usage.⁷⁴¹ Another impression that the Christian polemical texts give is that the Sogdian Church had a confrontational attitude to its religious milieu.⁷⁴²

The Sogdian Christian texts, judging by their usage of vocabulary, support the linguistic principle of indexicality, according to which the meaning of words, expressions and concepts is always determined by the specific social and cultural context in which linguistic transaction takes place. In other words, these texts are not simply products of translation as the transposition of meaning from one linguistic code to another (descriptive rendering or codification of Syriac into Sogdian), but are grounded in a specific cultural and ethno-linguistic context. Each word indicates a specific meaning that was realised in Sogdian in both generic or specific use, such as *by-* that outside the Christian texts was used to designate ‘god’ or ‘Mithra’, but in the Christian context designated ‘Alaha’.

This example further shows that the meaning of individual words and concepts in translation were not always attached to the specific concept in original language. Again, to look at the example of *alāhā* and *by-*, it is clear that in both languages these two words were attached to different specific concepts related to the ‘higher deity’ (monotheistic, polytheistic). However, in the context of Christian texts, these two words acquired a specific ‘unified’ meaning and the Christian readers would have understood that *by-* used in lectionary readings or Psalter or prayer is not an epithet of Mithra widely known in popular culture of Sogdiana, but represents *Alāhā*.

⁷⁴¹ SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2003, pp. 404 The complete list of other Indian with their Buddhist equivalent vocabulary attested in Sogdian Christian texts is found in SIMS-WILLIAMS, 1983, pp. 140.

⁷⁴² SIMS-WILLIAMS, 2003, pp. 401-410.

CONCLUSION

Out of Syriac into Sogdian: inculturation and transformation of Syriac Christianity among Sogdians

This dissertation has examined three sets of evidence comprising numismatic, archaeological (including architectural and smaller finds) and textual (Sogdian Christian texts), resulting in the first systematic study of material and literary evidence. This evidence has hitherto only been dealt with individually in specialist archaeological studies or in generic historical essays on Christianity in Central Asia.

Taken together, the evidence examined in this dissertation suggests that Christianity among the Sogdians, both in their native country and in the Diaspora, was well-integrated into the Sogdian cultural fabric. It was not a faith practiced only by a group of travelling monks and merchants, but rather by indigenous Christian communities who also were in interaction with other communities from within the region of their habitation and also in diaspora. The cross-examination of the material evidence also points to the fact that Sogdian Christians were not only instrumental in the inculturation of the faith into their own culture, but were also important players in its further transmission to other cultural regions.

From Sogdiana to Luoyang: traces of Sogdian Christians and their activities in the ethnographic data

The dissertation is structured around the categories of evidence examined. It commenced with an ethnographic survey chapter, which rehearsed the existing knowledge about Sogdians and Sogdiana. The data presented in this chapter reveals that in the fifth through ninth centuries CE, Sogdians were one of the most active ethno-linguistic groups involved in channelling material and cultural assets throughout the so-called Silk Road corridor. A particular aspect of their activity as purveyors of culture relevant here is the role of the Sogdians in the translation of literature, in particular religious literature. Aside from bearing significance in the transmission of religious ideas, the religious literature translated into Sogdian also influenced the development of Sogdian literature in various ways. The migration of Sogdians outside their homeland was also an important factor that contributed to the dissemination of Sogdian culture as well as different religions followed by Sogdians. With regard to the role of the Sogdians in the transmission of Christianity, the epigraphic evidence from China is of special interest. The information supplied by the Luoyang monument is a unique source confirming the presence of Christian communities among

Sogdians in the Diaspora as well as pointing to the possibility that some of them were already Christian before migrating to China.

Numismatic data: a marker of identity, continuity and sociological change

In CHAPTER TWO, the dissertation discussed a group of Sogdian coins bearing Christian iconography. The comparative examination of monetary iconography was carried out within the hermeneutical context of the use of religious symbols, particularly the cross, in Sassanid Persia. The main goal of the chapter was to investigate the value of coins as a historical source. The chapter showed that coins in human society participate in multiple contexts or spheres, such as weddings, burials or religious rituals,⁷⁴³ where the coins would be used as charms and amulets.⁷⁴⁴ Consequently they reflect different socio-cultural paradigms, and thus can ‘mirror’ the change and continuity of economical-political and socio-cultural trends.

In particular, the coin examples discussed in this dissertation attest to several important changes in Sogdian coinage, such as changes of design, minting techniques, and the development of new iconography. These changes are signified by the following elements: introduction of a new minting technique, the use of a tamgha, the introduction of Chinese design, and the subsequent alteration of the Chinese design by the use of the Sogdian tamgha and insertion of a legend (i.e. inscription).

Discussing the value of coins as testament to historical and social changes, Cribb notes that “money is a marker of cultural continuity and change” and coins are objects with the ability to provide “historians with concrete evidence of the sequence, development, and relationships of kingdoms, dynasties, races and religion.”⁷⁴⁵ This postulation is also applicable to the numismatic data considered in this dissertation. More precisely, in the context of the monetary tradition of Sogdiana and its comparable contexts, Sogdian coins bearing Christian iconography can be regarded to be the markers of:

- A. The Christian identity of the Sogdian ruler(s). The adaptation of the design and iconography in these coins was probably intentional; following the existing pattern of displaying religious symbols on coins, symbols which often reflected the personal attachment of that ruler to a specific religion.
- B. Change in the social representation of Christianity in Sogdiana. The coins had to serve as money; an alteration in design could have meant that the new coins would not be

⁷⁴³ In particular, the use of the coins as jewelry or grave-goods is known in many cultures.

⁷⁴⁴ For the use of money and coinage in religious rituals, such as burial, or the usage of coins as charms see: CRIBB, 1986; CRIBB, 1999.

⁷⁴⁵ CRIBB, 2007b, pp. 333.

readily accepted as currency. However, if there was an established social representation of Christianity that corresponded with the meaning of the symbols used in currency—suggesting that the symbol of the cross did not change the function of the coin, but merely matched the spiritual association of the ruler (and subjects) responsible for the issue of that particular coin group. This could have taken place only if Christianity had gained a certain amount of socio-political recognition and influence. This allowed Christians to express their belief through conventional monetary iconography, which was known to them perhaps from the Sassanid coins of Marv, or by the use of such symbols in personal seals and bullae.⁷⁴⁶

- C. Continuity of the cultural-spiritual and monetary tradition. ‘Sogdian Christianity’ was derivative of Syriac-speaking Christianity that underwent, over the centuries, a complex process of formation in the centralized political-religious environment of the Sassanid Empire. The development of the iconography of the cross, as seen above, took place in a specific historical context. Therefore, the Sogdian coins echo the Sassanid monetary tradition with which they were closely associated. This however does not exclude considering the Sogdian coins bearing Christian iconography within a wider monetary-iconography tradition, including those of Byzantium and Axum. In both these traditions, the use of the cross in coinage iconography developed under the influence of Christianity—especially when it gained socio-political recognition.

Archaeological data: permanency and physical integration

CHAPTER THREE assessed the archaeological data related to the theme of the dissertation. Similar to the previous chapter, the data was considered in the context of available comparable data from the limits of the area where the Church of the East in the early medieval period was the dominant expression of Christianity. In contrast to the textual evidence, the archaeological evidence discussed was either discovered in or acquired in Sogdiana proper. As Hodder points out “material culture is meaningfully constituted [and] it is organized by concepts as ideas.”⁷⁴⁷ This implies that archaeological data can be interpreted both as symbolic as well as realistic evidence; that is archaeological remains represent both a certain type of material culture as well as symbolising various social phenomena and

⁷⁴⁶ For Sassanid bullae and seals with Christian imagery discovered in Marv see GUBAEV *et al.* 1996, pp. 55-59. This work also provides bibliography to previous finds and researches. Among the imagery used on the seals there is one with a ‘Nestorian cross’ and three depicting ‘Daniel in the lions’ den’; both these devices are well attested on other Sassanian seals, see LERNER, 1977.

⁷⁴⁷ HODDER, 2000, pp.87.

interactions that contributed to their emergence. From this perspective the archaeological evidence recovered from Sogdiana would signify that:

1. Christianity in Sogdiana was not a short-lived phenomenon, but rather there was a significant visible community that built church buildings, acquired land, and generated the necessary economy for the production of liturgical objects, etc.
2. ‘Sogdian Christianity’ functioned in conformity with the architectural and liturgical tradition of the Church of the East, as displayed in the use of liturgical furnishings and the ground plan of the ‘Urgut Church’. In addition, material culture—being an array of physical (visible) expressions— indicates that Christianity in Sogdiana, at least in the period of dated material (c.a. seventh century CE), was not discreet but visible and distinct with regard to its material culture.

Textual data: indication to cultural and intellectual impact of Christianity to Sogdian culture

The aim of CHAPTER FOUR was the socio-linguistic examination of Sogdian Christian texts. In particular, the chapter focussed on a discussion of the principal theological and ecclesiastic terms found in Sogdian Christian texts. These were discussed in the context of the translation mechanisms that were employed in translating the Sogdian Christian texts from Syriac.

The textual evidence demonstrates the intellectually contextualized nature of ‘Sogdian Christianity.’ The entire surviving body of literature is translated from the Syriac. However, this literature, typologically speaking, can be perceived as an independent literary work. The existing fragments display a variety of codicological and scribal traditions. In addition, the expression of Syriac concepts and expressions in Sogdian native vocabulary also demonstrates that Sogdian texts are not only a codification of what is translatable, but also a source of new vocabularies and concepts, which were formed in the process of interaction of Sogdian speakers with Syriac Christian literature. In other words, the Sogdian Christian texts provided the premise for further linguistic development of the Sogdian language outside of which certain expressions and vocabularies were not found. This also applies to the spelling of certain words, which were different in different textual traditions.

“Words are, of course spoken to do things as well as to say things – they have practical and social impact as well as communication function.”⁷⁴⁸ Consequently, the varied vocabulary usage (loanwords, native words, etc.) observed in Sogdian Christian texts also shows the cultural-linguistic and cognitive contextualisation of a ‘Christian’ worldview into Sogdian. In other words, it was not just the translated text, but also the worldview that did not have a presence in Sogdiana before. Sogdian translators, as well as Christian communities or individual Christians who had access to Christian literature, began, as a result of these newly translated texts, to express new ideas and concepts using both ‘new’ and original words from their native language. Apart from communities and ethnicities, languages are associated with specific world visions.⁷⁴⁹ In other words, people express their worldviews, including religious ones, through their language either in text or in speech (similar to artwork). Accordingly, the various lexical and conceptual expressions outlined in this dissertation support the idea of the emergence of a Christian worldview among the Sogdians. This worldview was in dialogue with the larger Christian context, but was also distinct in that it was expressed through an indigenous linguistic (therefore cognitive and intellectual) medium. In other words, the textual evidence points to the fact that Christianity was not merely codified in script or loaned terminology, but was realised locally by means of new words in the Sogdian language.

⁷⁴⁸ HODDER, 1994, pp.112.

⁷⁴⁹ A very useful discussion of the relationship of language with specific world visions, and discussion of literature on linguistic relativity is found in the volume edited by GUMPERZ & LEVINSON 1996.

ABBREVIATIONS

AO	Arkheologicheskoe Otkrytiya
AOS	American Oriental Society
APAW	Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften
BAI	Bulletin of Asia Institute
BBAW	Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften
BGA	Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
BSFN	Bulletin de la Société Française de Numismatique
CAI	Srednyaya Aziya i Iran
CII	Corpus Inscriptiones Iranicarum
CUP	Cambridge University Press
CUP*	Columbia University Press.
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
DV	Drevnosti Vostochnie
EV	Epigrafika Vostoka
IIAN	Izvestiya Imperatorskoy Akademii Nauk
IAN	Izvestiya Akademii Nauk
IMKU	Istoriya Materialnoy Kultury Uzbekistana
IAN TSSR	Izvestiya Akademii Nauk Turkmenskoy SSR
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
JRCAS	Journal of the Royal Central Asiatic Society
JCSSS	Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
KD	Karakumskie Drevnosti
KSIIMK	Kratkie Soobsheniya Instituta Istorii i Materialnoy Kultury
KSIA	Kratkie Soobsheniya Instituta Arkheologii
MAR	Materialy po Arkheologii Rosii
MAISSP	Memoires de l'Academie Imperiale de Sciences de St. Petersburg
MIA SSSR	Materialy i issledovaniya po arkheologii SSSR
MKV	Materialnaya Kultura Vostoka
MDOG	Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin
NC	Numismatic Chronicle

OC	Oriens Christianus
ONU	Obshestvenie Nauki Uzbekistana
OUP	Oxford University Press
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
PA	Pravoslavni Palestinski Sbornik
RA	Rossiyskaya Arkheologiya
REB	Revue des études Byzantines
RN	Revue Numismatique
SA	Sovetskaya Arkheologiya
SAI	Svod Arkheologicheskikh Istochnikov
SNV	Strani i Narodi Vostoka
SPAW	Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaft
STF	AN Sobsheniya Tadzhikskogo Filial Akademii Nauk SSSR
SSSR	
SRAA	Silk Road Art and Archaeology
SRIKM	Sobsheniya respublikanskogo istoriko-kraevedicheskogo muzeya Tadzhikskoi
Tadj. SSR	SSR
TOVE	Trudy Otdela Istorii Kultury i Iskustva Vostoka Gossermitazha
TMSJ	The Master's Seminary Journal
TPS	Transactions of the Philological Society
TTAE	Trudy Tadzhikskoi Arkheologicheskoi Ekspeditsii
TYuTAKE	Trudi YujnoTurkmenistanskaya Arkheologicheskaya kompleksnaya ekspiditsiya
UCP*	University of Chicago Press
UCP	University of California Press
VDI	Vestnik Drevniy Istorii
VV	Vizantijskiy Vremenik
VZ	Vostochnie Zametki
ZIV	Zapiski Instituta Vostokovedeniya
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlaendischen Gesellschaft
ZVORAO	Zapiski Vostochnogo Otdela Russkogo Arheologicheskogo Obshtestva
ZhMNP	Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosvesheniya

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